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# JOHN OF DAMASCUS





# JOHN OF DAMASCUS

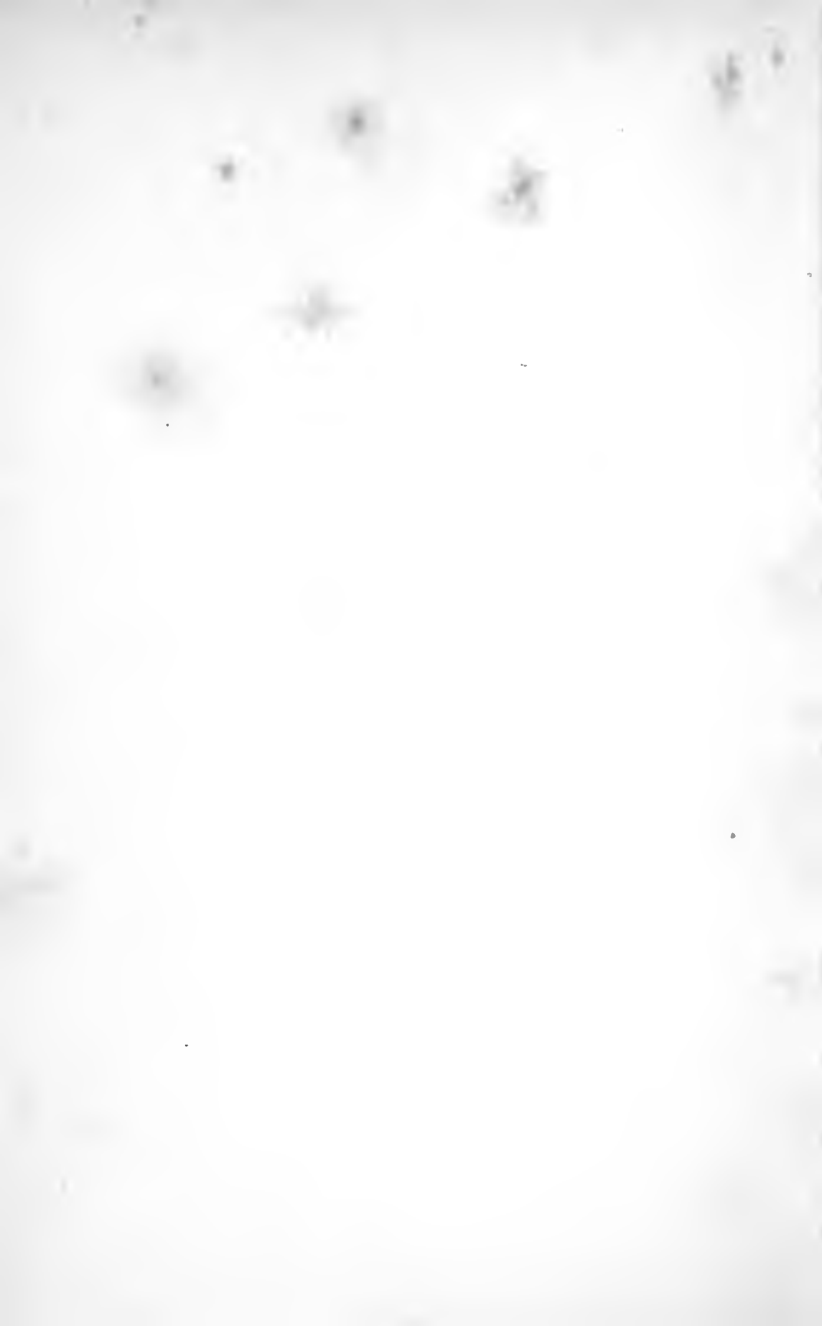
By DOUGLAS AINSLIE

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TO  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR MOUNTSTUART  
ELPHINSTONE GRANT DUFF, G.C.S.I., F.R.S.  
THIS POEM IS AFFECTIONATELY AND  
ADMIRINGLY DEDICATED  
BY HIS NEPHEW  
THE AUTHOR



*"Worshipper of the sun and moon  
"and the evening star this people was,  
"before we brought the priceless boon  
"and held before its eyes the cross."*

*Thus speak the priests of every creed  
and the Old Gods perish as is due,  
and the New triumph, till indeed  
these new are old and men make new.  
But always as the old creed wanes  
her votaries will linger yet,  
and though Lord Christ in Heaven reigns  
Queen Venus they will not forget.  
See them steal forth at still of eve,  
alert while all the world is sleeping ;  
see the stained altar, see them weave  
her mystic wreaths while she is peeping  
through the pale cloud. Just so one day  
the tale of Christ a tale of Fairy  
to the new men will seem when they  
with Venus shall have placed our Mary  
among the myths of old : they smile  
handling the crown of thorns ; for them  
the Christian legend will beguile  
an idle hour, the azure hem  
of Mary's robe, the Cherubim,  
the glistening glories of the sainted  
are but old fancies growing dim  
as fade the marvels Vinci painted.*

*Thus of the world in man's first youth ;  
he wanders on until arrested*

*he stands before the temple Truth  
built on the hill-top olive-crested.  
He kneels, and glowing there between  
the white slim columns of her shrine ;  
perfect, implacable, serene,  
dawns upon him the queen divine.  
Then says the world : " An empty shell  
" for the true goddess you have taken ;  
" long ages past the old faith fell  
" and the marble temple was forsaken ;  
" you are a man now, and behold  
" these things are really worth the scheming :  
" science and power and art and gold  
" and women fairer than your dreaming."  
And as the pagan with the priest  
so manhood spurns his boyhood's god,  
vowing he cares nor knows the least  
where winds the hilly path he trod.  
But when the field of youth is mown  
and earlier his evening closes,  
Lo ! he steals trembling forth alone  
to deck the scornèd shrine with roses,  
and weeping in the sacred place,  
see him recant his blasphemies :  
iron-grey his hair and in his face  
engraven the world's miseries.*

*O goddess, grant him kneeling here  
pilgrim and penitent of youth,  
vision ineffable to appear—  
that art religion, love, and truth.*

PART I

JOHN OF DAMASCUS





NOW who with me will leave for a while  
this age of Mammon, vulgar, vile,  
and glide twelve sleeping ages hence?  
Come, loose thy hold of all thy cares  
and all thy pleasures, merely snares  
to stay the mind that should be free.  
Time, what is time and what are we,  
and wherefore chained to the hours that be?  
Come, shake thy golden locks, dear friend,  
and shaking, through thy being send  
a message saying: "This is the day  
"I step a thousand years away  
"and pass a thousand leagues to the land  
"where, as though cradled in the sand,  
"two great religions of the world  
"first waxed and spread, till they enfurled  
"more than a half humanity:"  
So come with me to Palestine,  
where 'twixt Damascus and divine  
Jerusalem our stay will be;  
in the valley of Kidron, near the shore  
of the lake which the very birds abhor,  
sinking with shivering wings from the air,  
which is heavy with poison everywhere,  
to float quite dead upon those waves  
await for them like crystal graves—  
the waves of the Lake Asphaltites,  
the green, salt waves of the Dead Sea.  
But high on the rocks above us see,  
placed like an eagle's eyrie, is  
the Laura of the Mar Sabas,  
of which that saint the founder was.  
To-day is but as yesterday,

and a thousand years as they pass away  
scarce furrow once the brow of the hill,  
and scarce the brooding valley fill  
with any noticeable change ;  
as though this special point of the earth  
did garner thoughts beyond the range  
of time and space, of the utmost worth  
to the more than mortal part of us.  
'Twas hither that Saint Sabas fled  
for refuge in the "Valley of Fire"  
from the worse pangs of wild desire,  
and here the monk's true life he led.  
But not of him do we stay to tell,  
nor of the lion who loved him well,  
and shared awhile his rocky cell ;  
and hardly may swallow or song alight  
by those high caves, where dwelt St. John,  
Arcadius, Xenophon, brethren three,  
far beyond hearing yet each in sight ;  
and all their lives, when the first sun shone,  
waved greetings each for the day to be,  
silent for ever across the abyss :  
we flit, for we may not hover o'er this,  
and haste to the time when the Laura stood,  
a power for evil and for good,  
like all extreme that is.  
Twin towers and mighty buttresses,  
domes, battlements, and staircases,  
support the building as it leans  
toward the dismal, deep ravines  
that serve the Kidron for a bed ;  
and Nature all around is dead,  
save for the golden grackle's cry

or the wolf's howl ; no single flower  
is there to shadow hour by hour  
the slow sun's progress over the sky :  
white cliffs and yellow, all is dead  
without, within, save overhead  
sad singing, hark ! for 'tis a dirge  
rises and falls like the sea's surge.

*Take the last kiss,—the last for ever !  
Yet render thanks amidst your gloom :  
He, severed from his home and kindred,  
Is passing onwards towards the tomb :  
For earthly labours, earthly pleasures,  
And carnal joys, he cares no more :  
Where are his kinsfolk and acquaintance ?  
They stand upon another shore.  
Let us say, around him pressed,  
Grant him, Lord, eternal rest !  
Life and life's evil conversation,  
And all its dreams, are passed away.  
The soul hath left her tabernacle :  
Black and unsightly grows the clay :  
The golden vessel here lies broken :  
The tongue no voice of answer knows :  
Hushed is sensation, stilled is motion ;  
Toward the tomb the dead man goes.  
Let us cry with heart's endeavour,  
Grant him rest that is for ever.  
What is our life ? a fading flower ;  
A vapour, passing soon away ;  
The dewdrops of the early morning :—  
Come, gaze upon the tombs to-day.  
Where now is youth ? Where now is beauty,*

*And grace of form, and sparkling eye ?  
All, like the summer grass, are withered ;  
All are abolished utterly.  
While our eyes with grief grew dim  
Let us weep to Christ for him.<sup>1</sup>*

So ends the singing ye know so well,  
and 'tis of the poet that I would tell,  
of John Mansour the Damascene,  
Chrysoroas, "he of the golden flow,"  
true poet, if saint has ever been,  
and saint as true as poet, I ween ;  
this by God's help I'll show.  
But first, sweet lady, I'd crave your grace  
to grant me leave for a moment's space—  
(nay, blind me not with thy radiant face)—  
crave freedom for rhyme that rings  
true to itself and sighs or sings ;  
now free, now prisoned in the throats  
of birds who careless give their notes,  
according to a harmony  
that in the listener first must be.  
Now, having told of the dirge and the sea,  
spread wings again and pass with me  
northward and backward to the place  
where John the Doctor of Christian Art  
loved, lived, and suffered a little space,  
ere for his great and bleeding heart  
he found true solace in life apart  
from the suns and the storms of history,  
on these bare cliffs, by this Dead Sea.

<sup>1</sup> This translation is from Neale's *Hymns of the Eastern Church*, London, 1862.

Through seven miles of forest fair  
Damascus lies and drinks her fill  
of those cold torrents from the hill,  
Barrada, Phege; streams that were  
famous ere in her yellow glass  
old Tiber mirrored Rome.  
Heroes and kings, she has seen all pass,  
Damascus City of Pomegranates,  
City of Gardens, and now, though she  
is older far than all towns that be,  
even yet through her carven gates  
life ebbs, life flows; we can hardly climb  
upward to that dim point of time  
when Uz the first foundations laid;  
nor yet shall we stay our flight to tell  
of Abraham nor of Israel,  
of Naaman nor his maid:  
nor yet may we linger over the day  
Tiglath-Pileser led away  
to Kir the Damascenes;  
and here the end of her youth we see  
when the rest of the world began to be,  
an end of the Bible scenes.  
Time waxed, time waned, kings went, kings came,  
and Alexander's mighty name  
split into fragments like a gem,  
and the crowd struggles and gathers them;  
but always upon the crest of time  
Damascus sailed, and she always came  
equal with things sublime.  
City of Pomegranates, come tell  
what thine old stones must know so well;  
how looked young Pompey as he rode

to choose some palace for abode  
along the street called Straight? —  
He who brought Syria under the sway  
of the Roman babe of yesterday? —

“Hardly he deigned to turn aside  
“the head that won the world to bride,  
“crisp-curled, supreme, elate.

“He left me by the eastern gate,  
“he rode to rend the veil,  
“and face to face with Israel’s God  
“not his the gaze to quail.”

But mightier steps than his have trod  
these ancient stones, and the breach in the wall  
still shews where he who was Saul and was Paul  
must fly for his mission’s sake.

Refounder of the Christian world,  
who in your puissant grasp did take  
the soft and soothing gospel furled  
in the seamless robe, did crush and turn  
that flower-strown script to fires that burn,  
melt and refashion and make stern,  
as a wrought gate of piercèd iron,  
the faith that doth our world environ.

Ah, carven gates, through which we peer  
to count the crowns the Pontiffs wear,  
circlewise sitting backward there  
to guard the key which lies them near,  
ruddy with rust, and blood-flecks stain  
the lock our fingers try in vain!

Methinks you melt again, and lo  
those iron flowers Paul carved do flow  
back to the daisy, and a child  
leads back the Lamb, from us beguiled.

Five hundred years went gliding by,  
and the Christians reigned when the old gods waned,  
till Heraclius tottered on his throne  
in evil health, whose hand alone  
might with the scimitared monster vie  
which from the south is drawing nigh.  
Columns of desert dust revolving  
across the astonished earth reveal  
Mohammad, central column of all,  
men's sins in the one God absolving,  
all wounds in Paradise to heal  
with houris "exquisite and tall,  
"unknown of man or of any djinn."  
"I am the tower where wisdom dwells,  
"Ali the gate to enter in:"  
Thus spake the Prophet, but fate spells  
a different destiny, and the sword  
of Amrou, Ommya's subtle tongue,  
the pierced Koran and the vile fraud  
of the chosen ring, the empire wrung  
from the Bayard<sup>1</sup> of Islam, and the Tent  
sheltered in vain Hasan, Hosein.  
Kaled, Obeidah, who can stay?  
Werdan, Heraclius turned to clay?—  
Damascus falls, and the white and the green  
wave from the time-worn walls, serene  
as they ever waved where Kaled went—  
the "Sword of God"—and Moawiyah  
his crafty lord did govern here  
from the City of Gardens, and the God  
of Islam triumphed where Islam trod.  
Westward to Egypt, eastward ho,

<sup>1</sup> Ali.

borne on the winds the sons of the sand  
bear death or the faith wherever they go ;  
scimitar drawn and the Book in hand,  
they blot the boundaries of the land  
where Tigris and Euphrates flow,  
and the last of the Sassanides  
must fall, a suppliant, on his knees.  
Through palaces of Karmathian kings  
the desert cloud its passage wings,  
o'erwhelming all, and the Indian streams  
must flicker back the scimitar's gleams ;  
Moultan, Ferghana, Samarcand,  
Kashgar ; and on the western land  
as heavily lies Islam's hand,  
even to Segelmessa, where  
gnomes lay gold by the merchant's ware.  
Thus Islam won, but could not keep,  
and, like the whirling pillar of sand,  
fell with the wind and sank to sleep.

“ Never before so splendid was  
“ Our ancient city ” ; the fountains say,  
as in the marble courts they play  
and the white doves of peace do rove  
from orange grove to orange grove.  
Bright gleamed the Crescent, but still the Cross,  
though dimmed and dinted, yet remained,  
for what could the sons of the desert do  
in a world so old, to them so new ?  
They sought the help of the sect disdained ;  
and always the great Omeiyah placed  
by his side at the council and the feast  
some Christian whose wit and wisdom graced



and tempered the Arab fire at least.  
 Then the day came that he must die,  
 and in the Tomb of the Little Gate  
 Omeiyah sleeps, and by him lie  
 Mohammad's wives and he whose fate  
 it was his lord's life to relate,  
 Ibn Asaker, the Arab scribe.  
 And after him, to their founder's plan  
 the Omeiyad caliphs subscribe,  
 Walid and Hisham and Merwan ;  
 and the Cross triumphs in the court ;—  
 Akhtal, the Christian, in robes of gold,  
 hero triumphant forth is brought ;  
 loudly the herald cries : " Behold  
 " Akhtal, the greatest poet of all ;  
 " him the ' Commander's poet ' we call."  
 And Walid, enraged at a verse that pricks  
 his pillowed conscience, pierces and sticks  
 through with his arrows the Koran.  
 " For, ' Woe to the proud rebellious man,'  
 " you cry ; well, wait till the Judgment day  
 " and then call out to your Lord if you may  
 " "'Twas Walid pierced me ; I said him, Nay.'"

" Scarce in His Father's bosom lies  
 " Our Saviour Christ seven hundred year ;  
 " scarce eighty since their prophet flies  
 " with Israfil for charioteer,  
 " when thus the pagans reappear,  
 " and Walid comes to flout and jeer,"  
 mused Sergius the Logothete,  
 as his mule bore him along the street  
 (this Sergius was a Christian,

yet served the Kaliph as Christians can).  
 Sudden the mule stops where a crowd  
 is chaffering long, is chaffering loud,  
 for a Christian monk, in the narrow space  
 ere the street becomes the market-place.  
 "What think you, friend, will the old monk grace  
 "my harem's door?" says one; "more sure  
 "your garden as a rare manure."  
 This Sergius heard, and Cosmas saw  
 in his eye was pity, and hope once more  
 throbbed to his heart with the life blood.  
 And, "Gracious lord," he called in Greek,  
 "I am Cosmas monk, and I cannot speak  
 "the Saracen speech, nor shew, as I would,  
 "the treasures I bear from Sicily;  
 "for I am learned in all the lore  
 "that came with Christ and came before:  
 "Plotinus, Porphyry live in me,  
 "Plato is mine, and all the light  
 "That gave to the world the Stagyrityte."  
 Then Sergius answered him back in Greek:  
 "Old man, you need fear no more;  
 "for though you have lied, and the names you speak  
 "were all your knowledge, I know how sore  
 "on your frail limbs this iron's weight,  
 "and sad as a slave-youth seems, not one  
 "of all the sad sights under the sun  
 "is sadder than age at odds with fate;  
 "but if truth you tell, you shall guide my son  
 "through all the mazes of Plato's school."  
 Then Cosmas was unchained and led  
 forth, and upon a sturdy mule  
 his saviour placed him, and little was said

as they passed beneath the archway cool ;  
for now well-nigh the monk was dead,  
scarce having slept since from his bed  
the Saracens dragged him, in Syracuse.  
But soon good fare and generous wine,  
and the smiles of Sergius and gentle use  
(these last twain, healers most divine),  
coaxed back the heart to work again,  
and drove the blood to the restless brain,  
and Sergius gently bad him tell  
of those wise Greeks he loved so well.  
Then Cosmas' eyes flashed bright, as he  
launched forth on that great history ;  
and Sergius hearkened as he told  
of those who in their thoughts were bold  
as ever mariner upon sea ;  
the admirals they of philosophy ;  
how first in the grey Greek morn of thought  
rose Heraclitus, and did show  
that nought remains and all things flow :  
" Not twice can you nor can any go  
" over the same stream ; " this he taught.  
And how Parmenides said : " Not so,  
" for thought and being are the same,  
" and true things *are*, but the false *appear* ;  
" and to *know* well is not to *dream*,  
" and the one whole is pure and clear  
" like a vast crystal colourless sphere  
" at rest in the heavens ; "—and much more  
which teased the wit of Sergius sore ;  
so that he clapped his hands, and slaves  
brought sherbet in golden bowls, and cream  
and store of roses, and shook staves

with flapping arras them between,  
as though a real wind did blow.  
But scarcely did Cosmas touch the bowl  
with eager lips on the overflow,  
for Zeno trembled in his soul.  
He would tell the truth, he would tell the whole,  
and prove to the noble logothete  
that the monk Cosmas was worth his meat.  
“Yes, Zeno and Parmenides”—  
went Cosmas on; but Sergius waves  
to a slim youth among his slaves,  
and “Zeno and Parmenides”—  
Cosmas begins again forlorn;  
but the hanging curtains are withdrawn,  
and, bowing lowly to the ground,  
then bounding with an antelope’s bound,  
a boy like budding April springs  
all youth upon them, and his arms  
round his old father’s neck he flings,  
triumphant in his boyhood’s charms.  
“My son, he is my only son,”  
cries Sergius, when at last he is free;  
“his mother left this only one  
“to be a link ’twixt her and me.  
“Is he not beautiful?—Just so  
“the angels look, as to and fro  
“they wing their way round Heaven’s throne,  
“save that perchance their locks may glow  
“with light that shines from God alone.  
“But John’s hair is golden, and such eyes  
“saw you ever on this side Paradise?”  
Old Cosmas smiled, and stroked the hair  
of the fair child, who had drawn near

and gazed upon him without fear.  
Then the monk gathered into heads  
the wandering skein of ravelled threads,  
and told how Zeno had unspun  
all theories of cosmogony ;  
so that for him, you, I and he  
are or are not indifferently.  
He conjured up that day when all  
the living wits of the world did meet  
at the great Athenian festival :  
here Zeno and Parmenides greet  
our Plato's " many-coloured mind,"  
and to all the elder sophist said,  
Zeno, the younger, bowed his head :  
" We move of course, but then we find  
" that we can only *say* we move  
" from point to point and at each point rest ;  
" for all these points are breast to breast ;  
" Achilles cannot catch the sloth,  
" the arrow that flies is motionless,  
" the falling tower may seem to move  
" as does my tongue, but none the less  
" the sage well knows how still are both."  
And hence the monk to another sage  
of ancient Greece drew near, and the child  
by his kind eyes and speech beguiled,  
approached and sat at the teacher's feet ;  
whereat cried Sergius : " I engage  
" you Cosmas to lead my son to greet  
" those lords of thought, and for 'tis meet  
" that a freeman teach my son the Greek,  
" therefore I will the Kaliph seek,  
" and bring you back your liberty"

(Cosmas was slave since Sicily).  
Then Sergius rose and wished Cosmas well,  
and soon as the moving curtains fell  
upon his father, the monk 'gan tell  
the son of dim Pythagoras.  
Meeting of night and day, I ween :  
Cosmas in his dark cloak, and the child,  
like a cherub down from heaven beguiled,  
and above their heads the deep dark green  
of the orange trees and the palms in rows,  
and the long stretching even lines  
of the marble steps and the wheeling crows  
against heaven's blue depths overhead.  
And scarcely the child knows, but divines  
the old dim creed, that none are dead,  
but passed from one form to another,  
and each by the last life he led  
punished or blessed in some other ;  
and how we flit from star to star,  
and have known all, but ah ! forget,  
like the sand washed by the great tides ;  
and hence the good monk wandered far.  
Now Sergius returns, and liberty  
upbears the old monk on her wings.  
But still with the child he stands, while he  
swears that until his last day brings  
for him farewell to all earthly things,  
true to his duties he will be,  
and all he knows of the ancient school,  
and all the Christian too, will lay  
before the bright-eyed boy, nor stay  
till all his doubts are cleared away  
and his life fixed in the Christian rule,

“for always in the best of the Greek  
“we hear the coming Saviour speak.”  
The pact was made, and Cosmas stayed,  
and with a mighty love of the truth  
the old monk taught the willing youth.  
And Cosmas found that Athena’s light  
glowed in John’s eyes, so blue and bright ;  
for all he taught was stored away  
beneath the forehead’s gold-curled rings ;  
nor can aught crabbed diction stay  
the boy’s thirst to drink up the springs  
that flow from distant Athens there  
where the name of Christ makes clear the air.  
Diophantus and the Ptolemies,  
Algebra and geometry,  
and the gold dust of truth that lies  
where men have striven hard to see :  
but most of all Pythagoras  
among the ancient sages was  
the one whose vivid eagle sight  
Cosmas delighted to reveal  
in glimpses of transcendent light  
to the bright boy whose will could feel  
and memory seize upon a thought  
too distant yet quite to be brought  
within full compass of his mind.  
Thus several years they dwelt together  
careless almost of the outside weather—  
scarce knowing what vizir might reign  
for a moment in the Kaliph’s train,  
till the day came that Cosmas died.  
Full twenty hours did John abide  
by the dead semblance of his friend ;

then, for he knew his grief could lend  
no joy to the spirit passed away,  
John harkened to his father's prayer,  
and thenceforth followed everywhere  
the business of the logothete,  
and oftentimes passed nigh half the day  
copying and counting, making neat  
columns of figures, and the crowd  
of dusty things that like a cloud  
hang round the central pulse of power.  
Thus came it that, as years fled on,  
it oftentimes happened that the son  
talked with the Kaliph by the hour.  
Sergius would say, "Go you to-day ;  
"and bear the Kaliph this from me."  
And the little John grew John Mansour ;  
and none at the court was known so sure  
alike in lesser things as great.  
Then clanged again the stroke of fate,  
and Sergius followed on the way  
which Cosmas took five years before.  
And Mansour sorrowed long and sore  
for the father he should see no more.  
But grief must cease, and tears must stay,  
ere the staff gripped in willing hand  
will help the traveller to the land.  
Soon came word from the Kaliph's grace  
that he should fill a higher place  
than ever Christian filled before :  
Mansour was named chief councillor.  
And now the straining reins of power  
lay in John's hand, for the Kaliph knew  
that the Christian John was firm and true



as Sergius in the years gone by.  
 "If this be so, then what care I  
 "if he worship Christ as the deity  
 "equal with Allah, and Miriam,<sup>1</sup>  
 "sister of Moses, child of Imram,  
 "place with his god in Paradise.  
 "For certain God Mansour will damn,  
 "yet *now* is the Christian witty and wise  
 "and true to *me*, though he worship lies."  
 Thus all was well till Leo roared  
 against the worship of the Lord  
 in form of picture, shrine or saint:  
 "God is no idol daubed with paint."  
 Such speech Mansour would not endure  
 against the image and semblance fair  
 of God made beautiful everywhere;  
 so in his hand he took the pen,  
 and in words of splendour and eloquence  
 bade the Christian world resist his power  
 who would destroy the gracious presence  
 of God made visible to men.  
 Then waxed Mansour from hour to hour;  
 then raged the Emperor in his heart,  
 and subtly, since he did not dare  
 slay John while in the Kaliph's care,  
 commands his scribes with all their art  
 a semblance of John's script prepare,  
 wherein he seems to sign away  
 allegiance to his Saracen Lord.  
 "Weak is the Saracen guard,"—thus ran  
 the lying script,—“and on a day  
 “if so you will it, shall your sword

<sup>1</sup> Virgin Mary.

“into Damascus find a way :  
“five hundred men at arms I can  
“lead secretly within the walls,  
“and with Almansor his Empire falls.”  
Thus and much more far many a page  
ran the epistle which Leo sent  
to Almansor, that he might know  
Mansour for traitor and for foe.  
Then fell the Kaliph in a rage,  
and ere the first wild gust was spent  
called for Mansour, who all in vain  
pleaded the forgery, and revealed  
the hatred in the script concealed,  
which planned his ruin ; but “not again  
“will Almansor in the ambush fall :  
“John wrote the treason, and the hand  
“which did the deed the brain has planned  
“must perish, perish also all  
“the power and place he once did own.”

The deed was done, and John alone  
prayed to the Virgin that the pain  
might cease and the arm come whole again.

Then sick at heart, of praying tired,  
John fell to sleep, and dreamed of her  
to whom just now he had raised his prayer ;  
And as he dreamed there came, attired  
in blue cœrulean, on a cloud,  
which as she went did move with her,  
compassed with heavenly light about,  
and cherubs flitting round her head,  
the Mother of Christ, and sweetly said :

“ John, your prayer is heard,  
“ John, your arm is healed,  
“ John in light revealed,  
“ See me, hear the word.”

Then John awakened from his sleep,  
and found his arm whole as before  
the cruel sword in his blood did steep,  
save where a thin red circle bore  
one witness to the Faith the more.

And soon the Kaliph is heard to say :  
“ Now where is John ? must all business stay  
“ because none of you, who are bold and true  
“ Arabs can equal this Christian Jew ?—  
“ Go fetch the caitiff, and though in chains,  
“ we will use his base and bastard brains.”

So John was brought, and the Kaliph saw  
his arm was whole as it was before.

Then wild indeed was the heathen's rage,  
and “ What,” he cried, “ do my slaves engage  
“ to spare the punishment when due ?

“ Go fetch the soldier who should hew  
“ the right arm off as his shall too.”

Then the man was brought, and when he saw  
John's arm was healed, he fell on the floor,  
and cried with a mighty voice : “ Some djinn  
“ has compact with this man of sin ;

“ I swear, most noble lord, with a blow  
“ Mansour his arm fell off, and I know  
“ the place exact where I struck, can show ”—  
but here John bared his arm, and the rim  
revealed the miracle wrought on him.

Then the Kaliph turned him and hid his face.  
and communed with his soul a space.

At length he said : " You, John Mansour,  
 " my servant, trusty, tried and sure ;  
 " hereby I grant the wealth I took,  
 " and all the lands : nor shall I brook  
 " again the lies that any send  
 " against my servant, councillor, friend ;  
 " and if any dare to speak one word  
 " against Mansour, that man has heard  
 " his own death sentence in his lies,  
 " and ere their echo cease he dies.  
 " John Mansour, you I hereby raise  
 " with me above all blame or praise  
 " of this my court ; and I pray of you  
 " pardon for hasty action due  
 " to the vile scheming of a foe.  
 " Hear all the world : I will it so."  
 Then John bowed low before the throne,  
 and thanked the Kaliph for justice done :  
 " But none of the splendours you offer me, none  
 " can I accept, though far beyond  
 " the worth of one who was overfond  
 " of this world's empty bauble show.  
 " Now at your hands, O gracious lord,  
 " one boon I crave ; that I may retire  
 " to a far distant place I know,  
 " Mar Saba in the Valley of Fire,  
 " where I will hearken to the word  
 " that has saved me once from anguish dire  
 " by the sweet healing vision of Love,  
 " Mary the Mother from above."  
 Then the Kaliph rose from his silver throne,  
 and came to the place where stood St. John,  
 and, drawing a gold chain from his neck,

alive with ruby and chalcedon,  
threw it the saint's bent neck upon,  
and cried: "O friend, you can little reckon  
"how great my love and how great my loss,  
"if thus, as you say, you yet will to cross  
"my purpose of all things good for you.  
"But as you will, so shall you do.  
"Only I ask if again you see  
"the vision of Miriam, plead for me."  
Then the saint in short but earnest speech  
talked with the Kaliph of things of state,  
and bade farewell to his friends, and each  
received a share of his new-found wealth,  
and joyfully, penniless, more great  
than ever before, by the eastern gate,  
in a monk's robe, St. John, by stealth  
crept out at night, to join the choir  
of monks that serve in the Valley of Fire.

"Who knocks thus loudly down below?  
"upward the rocks the echo throw;  
"depart, depart in peace," cried one,  
as at the postern knocked St. John.  
"I am a wanderer from afar,  
"John of Damascus, and I know  
"your rule, your life and every word  
"from the teacher's lips to my heart will go;  
"therefore descend." When the monk had heard  
the name of the pilgrim, soon was stirred  
in every part that place of stone,  
as in a church at the first deep tone  
of the organ lesser thoughts must fly,  
and our thoughts soar with the sound on high.

The Abbot opened to St. John,  
and all alike the monks would strive  
to serve the greatest saint alive  
(for so they held him who did dare  
beard Leo in his lion's lair),  
to serve an it were but a menial part  
for the "Doctor of the Christian Art."  
But the more they worshipped at his feet,  
the more John craved for the discipline  
that his soul needed ere he could win  
his way to the side of the Paraclete.  
But none of the monks would undertake  
such a task as the training of the man  
who, ere his monk's life even began,  
had braved an emperor on his throne,  
had ruled o'er Islam as his own,  
for whose sweet, ardent sufferings' sake  
Mary the Mother of God came down,  
all radiant in her pale blue gown,  
and spake with him and healed his wound;  
"and you may see the very rim  
"where her gentle fingers tended him,  
"left as a sign when his arm came sound."  
Now who would dare so much as even  
dispute with one who had been in Heaven?  
much less by the narrow monkish rule  
presume to keep a saint in school?  
Then John, as the throng of monks stood near,  
and all would serve, but none command,  
asked if the Laura all were here?  
Then one made answer: "Isumbrand,  
"old and decrepid, dwells alone,  
"nor ever leaves his cell of stone."

"Pray bring me to him," said St. John.  
So upward from terrace to terrace they climb,  
the saint and the monks in a thin brown line,  
and at length on the topmost ridge they stand,  
panting for breath, and "Isumbrand,"  
cries one and raps at the closed cell door.  
"Enter by Christ and by Mary's grace,"  
answers the old monk's voice from within  
(and always he knelt and muttered o'er  
the prayer that should purge his soul of sin—  
some old sin done when the wrinkled face  
was bright like the glow of his silver shield,  
and the wild blood hummed and the will must  
yield).

Then John drew near and bowed him low,  
and the other monks retired below.  
John said: "Perchance you have heard my name,  
"known well enough in the world, till I came  
"to free my soul of its thousand sins  
"here where the chastened spirit wins  
"its heavenly way by penance due;  
"obedience and those other laws,  
"made for the weal of him who adores  
"Christ and his rule; I pray of you  
"to guide me sternly, Isumbrand,  
"for here a sinful monk I stand,  
"and cry in vain for firm control:  
"those others all would kiss my hand,  
"and kissing damn my ruined soul.  
"Oh! issue but a firm command,  
"and as your slave in Christ I toil,  
"and by your help my soul assoil."  
Then John fell down and thanked the Lord

who at length had heard his prayer ;  
and when he arose the aged monk  
was standing waiting there.  
And, "Thou shalt utter not one word,  
"thou of the golden flow  
"of speech and pen, and the pleasure drunk  
"from the eyes and the listening mouths of men,  
"charmed in thy puissant presence and sunk,  
"henceforth thou shalt never know.  
"But thou shalt pray in penitence  
"for thy dead deadly sins,  
"and when the moon beams and the world dreams  
"not then shalt thou rest, not then,  
"but by vigil and prayer shalt aye mount the stair  
"that heavenward leadeth hence.  
"And if these rules thou disobey,  
"from my cell thou shalt be expelled straightway."  
"Good is not good unless well done,"  
said John (and sure never beneath the sun,  
arrayed against the powers of night,  
loomed brighter the legions of the light.  
Great councillor with the winged crown  
of power and the violet crown  
of empery in the world of words,  
these and the rest he will hurl down  
those rugged rocks, aye let them drown  
where fall the very passing birds :  
in the salt waves of the Dead Sea).  
Thus and thus for many a day  
works and strives the saint alway :  
works at vile tasks, and never a word  
through the bars of his golden<sup>1</sup> lips is heard ;

<sup>1</sup> Chrysoroas.



until the day when Thomas died ;  
him the monks loved (and well betide  
his soul which doth with God abide).  
The monks they loved him very well,  
and all that night and that day could tell  
no other tale than the things he said,  
and the things that had pleased their brother dead.  
Now the fame of John as a poet came  
wafted with him like tongues of flame,  
and as they prayed and moaned full sore,  
one of them cried : " Since nevermore  
" we can see our brother in the Lord,  
" let us make a dirge, and let every word  
" be cunningly placed, and let the whole  
" rise like a temple to the soul  
" of Thomas whom we loved so well."  
Then one said : " Nay, if he dared disobey  
" once in the world the stern behest,  
" our John the poet could make the best  
" of any dirge, since to his rest  
" St. Sabas passed among the blest."  
Therefore they came with suppliant airs  
to John as he toiled on the steep stone stairs,  
bearing the water for the cell  
of Isumbrand, and : " We know well  
" your penance of silence, brother John ;  
" but now is Thomas passed away,  
" him whom we loved, and we would say  
" how bright for us his presence shone,  
" how dark these walls since he has gone ;  
" but alas no skill in verse have we,  
" so songless and dirgeless must he be  
" laid to his rest to-morrow morn ;

“unless of your great love and wit  
“some song of mourning shall be born,  
“which shall meet his soul and fly with it.  
“Ah! grant our prayer, by the sacred eyes  
“of Mary Mother, sweet and wise.”  
Thus spoke the monk, and the others drew  
nearer the saint as he ceased to climb  
the steep stone steps, and thoughtful grew  
his eyes, and furrowed the brow sublime.  
But he answered nothing at that time,  
save with a bow and a half smile,  
as upward again he 'gan to climb,  
musing, musing all the while.  
Soon images rose, and the very words  
swarmed all around like travelling birds  
that seek the beacon's golden light,  
which pierces through the gloom of night.  
Then suddenly to an end he brought  
his work, and the devious ways of thought  
shewed in his brain they would converge  
into the music of the dirge,  
which since his day men sing alway  
to speed the soul upon its way.  
That very noon they sung the same,  
and the sound of the singing rose like flame  
upward to the hard bare cell  
where Isumbrand with John did dwell.  
“What dirge is that they sing below?”  
asks Isumbrand, as his fingers pleat  
the strands of the basket at his feet;  
“'tis strange the words I should not know,  
“who came here sixty years ago.  
“A noble dirge it is; I shall pray

“the Abbot, on my burial day  
“an it please him, to let sing the same.”  
Then over the face of the saint there came,  
first of his life, a blush of shame :  
“ I wrote the dirge : be mine the blame.”  
Isumbrand rose and spake no word,  
but stretched his arm and pointed down  
where yet the melody was heard.  
The saint obeyed, and with bowed head  
passed out and downward, ever down  
the rock-hewn staircase he must tread,  
thus “driven forth from Paradise.”  
Anguished he seeks the chapel gaunt,  
where the monks meet him, and his chaunt  
speeds ever heavenward with the soul,  
first of the million souls that flies,  
buoyed on such wings to its last goal.  
What comfort now for the poet saint?  
The monks crowd round, and strive to soothe  
with compliments and phrases smooth  
Mansour in sorrow ; but aye he cries,  
“ I am driven forth from Paradise.”  
At last, one, bolder than the rest,  
says : “ Father, for your dirge’s sake  
“ which wafts our Thomas on his way,  
“ see now I climb to the Laura’s crest,  
“ and with Isumbrand your peace will make,  
“ or at the worst some solace lay  
“ on your sad soul.” Most grateful was  
the saint, and anxiously awaited  
the answer with his future weighted.  
He left them, and no sound struck there  
as the saint knelt in silent prayer,

and the monks stood wondering wistfully  
 what the mind of Isumbrand would be.  
 Sudden the listeners' shorn and grey  
 heads are turned to gather a sound  
 like drops from a rain sluice on the ground.  
 "'Tis James descending from Isumbrand,"  
 goes round the whisper, and now John may  
 rise from the stones and cease to pray,  
 for the final answer is on its way  
 to the heart of gold from the heart of clay.  
 He enters, and down the bare cold walls  
 shivers the message that appals.  
 "John the sinner, so-called the saint,  
 "waxen will and heart all faint;  
 "hear the penance that you must do  
 "ere Isumbrand will govern you.  
 "Some fifty leagues as I think divide  
 "John the vizier from the town of his pride :  
 "twelve baskets lie complete in my cell,  
 "each worth a silver piece at the most.  
 "Hence, then, vile sinner, fulfil thy boast ;  
 "pride of the pagan, poet of hell :  
 "speed to Damascus, and straightway sell  
 "each of the baskets at pieces three,  
 "nor till they are sold return to me."

. . . . .  
 Who stands there in the street called Straight,  
 stands and calls like a figure of fate,  
 "Baskets to sell?" was ever seen  
 a monk more foul, of more piteous mien?  
 Come tell us, monk, now who are you

that thrive so ill 'neath the rule of the Jew?  
 "I come from the Laura upon the Hill,  
 "my name is John, and I here fulfil  
 "the righteous penance for my sin."  
 "And what, sir monk, may that have been?"  
 "Good friend, an I told, you would not see  
 "the exceeding great enormity  
 "of the evil thing that I have done,  
 "but *these*, I must sell them every one,  
 "ere I may dare return again  
 "to purge the rest of my merited pain."  
 He points to the baskets piled up high,  
 and the crowd of idlers draws more nigh.  
 Says one: "The price of that wicker crate?"  
 "Three pieces of silver." "Crazy pate!"  
 "For two of copper I'd easily buy  
 "two better than yours; but I see, you would try  
 "to cozen the faithful, Christian hound!"  
 At this the loiterers gathered round,  
 bronze-faced Arabians, and they stare  
 at the monk as he stands by his high-priced ware.  
 "And a copper piece is the most I would pay  
 "to see him and his rubbish carted away,"  
 shouts one, and his fellows jostle and laugh  
 at the bright-eyed monk as he leans on his staff,  
 silent, serene; though the cruel ray  
 of the Syrian sun can find a way  
 through the dark cloak dusty with many a mile:  
 round him the rabble presses, vile.  
 Sudden a shout, "Al Zobeir!"  
 All vanish, melted away with fear,  
 and alone he stands in the street called "Straight,"  
 John Mansour, councillor of state,

Friend of the Kaliph once, but now  
an humble monk, with downcast brow.  
Slowly the white ass draws more near,  
whereon sits great Al Zobeir,  
Vizir and protosymbolos.  
If he cast but a careless glance across  
the street, two old friends' eyes will meet.  
"Wherefore those baskets piled on high?  
"and who is the monk that stands them by?"  
asks Zobeir, and his servants speed.  
"His name is John, and he comes"—but here  
John Mansour and Al Zobeir  
in one another's eyes had read  
sweet memory of the old days dead.  
Straight from his ass Al Zobeir leapt,  
and cried, "What strange tryst have you kept  
"in this strange guise, with this strange ware?"  
"I come from the Laura of St. Sabas,  
"and thither again I hope to pass  
"when all these baskets have been sold."  
"I buy them all, old friend; here's gold.  
"Now come" (he mounted down from his beast),  
"your vow's performed; with me at least  
"take rest and refuge from the sun,  
"and remain with me till the day is done.  
"You know my palace hid in the trees,  
"and the fountains and marble and seats of ease,  
"spread round the green, cool place.  
"How often have we pondered there  
"on things to come and things that were;  
"but now, though you are far away—  
"you will yet set free for a friend one day."  
John smiled through all his dirt and dust,

and, "Come what may, we are bound to trust  
"old friends, though the world be new ;  
"so far away am I now from where  
"we dwelt in thought, that I hardly dare  
"tread again the path that I trod with you.  
"But you yourself are the best of the past,  
"and thoughts may change but the heart doth last ;  
"so fare I with you and with you stay  
"till daybreak of the coming day ;  
"for, truth to tell, my head doth swim,  
"my senses all seem blurred and dim ;  
"and had you not come at need, dear friend,  
"my mission with my life had end."

So now they pass upon their way,  
and heads are turned and steps must stay  
to see on foot the great Vizier  
—on foot the great prince Zobeir—  
and on his ass a strange foul friar,  
for none did know him for Mansour,  
who a while past with steps secure  
trod these same stones, till the Kaliph's ire  
drave him forth to the Valley of Fire  
(so little may a face endure  
in the vague memory of the throng,  
which loves none much and loves none long).  
Thus monk and infidel they pass  
(friend and friend were now more near),  
and the slaves run on some steps before,  
and wide on its hinges swings the gate.  
"What ho ! what ho !" cries Zobeir,  
"bring lemons quick and crystal glass  
"full of red wine ; for a friend once more  
"crosses my threshold, led by fate."

Slaves come in swarms, and a golden plate  
bears the best of the City of Pomegranate.  
But John's tired limbs ache all the way,  
scarce finds he strength to say them nay,  
who, crouching, fawning at each hand,  
offer the dainties of the land.  
This Zobeir sees, and waves away  
the slavish questioners, and enquires  
what most his long-lost friend desires.  
Deep in the cool green marble tank  
soothed and swathed the saint's limbs sank,  
and when he crossed again its rim,  
though late almost on his path to heaven,  
John knew that the world had need of him.  
Then slaves bear in the softest wool  
that ever from wild hill sheep was riven,  
the finest linen of Bagdad,  
and over all a garment cool  
chosen from the choicest Zobeir had.  
These John is now obliged to don,  
for soiled and torn is his robe, and none  
so foul a garment would deign to wear  
as a guest in the house of Zobeir.  
Thus thought the saint as he made his way  
through the curtained alcoves that masked the day  
out to the open court, where stands  
his noble host with outstretched hands.  
And by St. George I think they were  
of the soaring sort as noble a pair  
as God has let live anywhere :  
John with his glance all eagle and fire ;  
gentle and calm, Al Zobeir,  
the lord of war, for now the best



of all his nature owned was brought  
to focus in the single thought  
to greet his friend, to greet his guest.  
Then sat they at the board together,  
and the lesser guests let sit wherever  
they willed below, and the slaves brought meat,  
and both in the shade of the palms did eat.  
Then flashed the eyes of John once more,  
and he thanked the friend who had saved and tended  
the life which had that day well-nigh ended ;  
Then they talked their time of friendship o'er.  
Meanwhile, to escape the heat of the sun,  
those who passed by came one by one  
and stood beneath the welcome shade  
which the wide-spreading palm-trees made,  
so that soon a numerous company  
filled every place where shade might be.  
" Mayhap," said the Vizier, " you can tell  
" us something of your new strange life,  
" since you left us all and went to dwell  
" beyond the reach of mortal strife? "  
" Nay," said St. John, " my life has been  
" unworthy, vile, and very mean.  
" But how a Prince of India came  
" to leave his age and adore the name  
" of Christ, and like a bright pure flame  
" burned all his days, that he might be  
" as a beacon to humanity,  
" if you will, I shall disclose to you."  
Al Zobeir bowed, and nearer drew  
the swarthy, turbaned company.



PART II

THE LEGEND OF BARLAAM  
AND JOASAPH



OUT of the mountains of the East,  
beyond the flowing of the seas  
which surge round India, comes this tale  
of Barlaam ; how he once set sail  
for the land of the great King Abenner,  
to teach the Prince who grew the priest.  
This King was fair to look upon ;  
certès, the sun has never shone  
upon a pair so very fair  
as when with his queen of the blue-black hair  
and the look of lovely things that are gone  
he sat upon his jewelled throne.  
One wish of all Abenner had,  
one thing he felt would make him glad  
more than all others : a male heir  
(for over many years the queen,  
fair and bare as the moon had been).  
Therefore, he ofttimes sought the cave  
where dwelt the Evil Thing, to crave  
an answer to his ardent prayer.  
At length the Mystery spake : " You may  
" await an heir upon the day  
" the queen shall dream that upon her  
" an elephant divine and white  
" come down from heaven shall alight."  
Soon after, just such a dream to the queen  
stole through the forest, through the trees,  
the curtains of her couch between.  
Thereat the King did much rejoice,  
and calling with a kingly voice,  
he pardoned all the sinners who  
in durance lay, as was their due.  
And the wine flowed and victims fell

through the King's realm, and all seemed well.  
But distant thunder did foretell  
the coming storm: thus it befell.  
Count Hiram was a puissant lord  
whose castles and whose counties lay  
wide through the land, and the King alway  
swore that with Hiram and his sword  
the loss of all he could afford,  
for that he'd win them back again  
with such a liege to help; but man  
follows his heart and lets the brain  
cry "danger, danger" all in vain.  
For always underneath the ban  
of the great King the Christian monk  
did languish, and so far at least  
Hiram had helped, and never beast  
with equal joy did hunter hunt  
as my Lord King and Hiram Count  
those of the Faith (for both were sunk  
deep in idolatry). Now came  
strange whisperings and the lofty name  
of Hiram, coupled with the creed  
that most Abenner loathed: "He's fled,  
"and has left all, and even the steed  
"he mounted flying has come again  
"back to its stable, riderless."  
"Twere better for him to be dead,"  
cried Abenner; "him I did place  
"beyond the reach of blame or praise,  
"to be my general in the wars,  
"in peace to frame with me my laws.  
"Depart and seek this rogue who dares  
"leave wealth and wife and all the cares

“and all the joys of life to lie  
“with wild beasts naked under the sky.”  
He spake, and men at arms went forth,  
the abject ministers of his wrath.  
Far in the desert, by a spring  
beneath a palm tree,  
Hiram they found transformed and calm.  
And straightway to the King they led  
this Christian man, and Abenner said :  
“Now tell me, Hiram, what you do  
“thus leaving all? What secret harm  
“has any wrought you in my court,  
“that thus you flee away at night  
“and like a thief are haled to sight?”  
Then answered Hiram, “First from you  
“drive hence your foes, O King, I shall speak  
“when they are gone.” “Where shall I seek  
“these enemies of mine you fear?”  
said Abenner, and glanced at who stood near.  
“Anger and lust, O King, they stand  
“upon your right and your left hand ;  
“one fiery red as a furnace is ;  
“his words like water scalded hiss ;  
“purple the other, and he knows  
“that most his strength from power grows.”  
Then said the King : “Behold I drive  
“the twain away and in their place  
“stand justice and calm temperance.  
“Therefore, I pray you, that you strive  
“to tell me first by what fell chance  
“this plague of Christ made foul your face ;  
“then shall we counsel take and see  
“how best you may quite cleansed be,

"and led back to reality."  
 Then said the saint : " If you, O King,  
 "would know why every finite thing  
 "I do abhor henceforth and spurn all  
 "the joys of life for the eternal.  
 "When a little child, I heard the word  
 "and in my heart towards the light  
 "it grew and drave me to detest  
 "what you and yours still love the best ;  
 "yet, still I laboured and must fight  
 "daily against the powers of night,  
 "until the Saviour's grace once granted  
 "for ever the law of sin supplanted,  
 "and as a veil from me were riven  
 "the sins that hid my heart from Heaven.  
 "And from that day the narrow way  
 "I chose and follow, and detest  
 "what you and yours yet love the best ;  
 "the joys of life and the returnings,  
 "the loves of life and the vain yearnings  
 "which torture, yet are but a dream,  
 "which never are, but only seem,  
 "yet wound with deadly dream-world claws,  
 "yet slay by deadly dream-world laws.  
 "I love alone the good and true  
 "and loving them can love not you,  
 "nor wealth nor honours nor the ties  
 "which like a chain our families  
 "weave round our lives. Him know not ye,  
 "who made man with His mighty hands  
 "adorned with immortality  
 "and crowned him King of many lands ;  
 "and more than all made Paradise,



“ where he should dwell in godly wise.  
“ But man, alas, was led astray  
“ by envy and the thousand sins  
“ which set his path about like gins,  
“ tempted along the rose-bowered way  
“ which leads from Eden towards the sands  
“ where pleasure wrings her empty hands  
“ and rose-crowns fade and sceptres lie  
“ like bones stretched out beneath the sky.  
“ Thus man fell far, and all the spheres  
“ rang forth with well-deservèd jeers—  
“ angels and demons laughed to see  
“ what piteous thing a man may be.  
“ Then Christ, who is the Son of God,  
“ came down from Heaven and was a man,  
“ suffered for us beneath the rod,  
“ and at the last was crucified  
“ that we might be as we began.  
“ And Christ it is for us who died  
“ whom you in pagan wrath deride,  
“ and plunged in shameful pleasures lie,  
“ a plague between the earth and sky,  
“ worshipping ‘ Gods ’ which are the spawn  
“ of your mad brain and die unborn.  
“ Nay worse than this, for you have drawn  
“ in your fell path the million slaves,  
“ who bend the knee to your decree,  
“ whose backs have felt your soldiers’ staves ;  
“ whose souls in peril stand by you ;  
“ wherefore, I swear and loudly cry  
“ that come the worst that you can do,  
“ no part in this apostasy  
“ from the Saviour Christ, man’s Friend, have I.

"Tear me with beasts or send the sword  
 "to mow me down before the Lord  
 "and I rejoice at last to be free  
 "from things that change, and snare and flee.  
 "The Scripture saith, that the whole world  
 "in the cloak of evil is enfurled  
 "and, 'love not the world nor what is there,'  
 "for all is lust of the flesh or eyes,  
 "or the pride of life which even dies  
 "as you look on it, but he who dare  
 "the will of God do and declare  
 "liveth eternally, and I  
 "have left the age and joined with those  
 "whose mind like mine true wisdom knows,  
 "who tread the path that points afar  
 "where the eternal mansions are.  
 "Those love I, those are brethren mine,  
 "the rest I flee, and wait alone  
 "in solitude the call divine.  
 "Fearless of all, my soul at rest,  
 "O King, I wait on your behest;  
 "courage in suffering is shown,  
 "my death may for my life atone."  
 Then raged the King at heart full sore  
 and longed the holy man to tear  
 in pieces, smiling on him there,  
 and thought of torments many a score.  
 But pride spoke first and his pledged word  
 and, "Ho," he cried, "you knave and fool,  
 "I know not in what vilest school  
 "this dirge of blasphemous sound you learned.  
 "But now, pardie, your flesh had burned  
 "for your rash speech, save for my word

“and for our ancient friendship’s sake,  
“sacred to me, which, though you break,  
“preserves you yet against my will  
“from the flames that burn and the beasts that kill.  
“Therefore, rise up, and get you hence  
“back to the desert, but if again  
“you e’er come hither, with intense  
“and subtle thinkings—out of pain  
“from your body I will draw your soul,  
“as the flame rises from live coal.”

Then to the solitudes returned,  
weary and sad, that man of God  
who fain the martyr’s crown had earned  
and the flaming path to heaven trod.  
And the queen’s dream came true to her—  
for a son she bore to Abenner,  
who of all kings’ sons was the most fair.  
Then made the King right royal cheer,  
feasting his subjects far and near.

Then came the chief Astrologer  
and many a lesser follower,  
and the King spake and bade them read  
the infant’s life in starry screed.  
And being prepared, they said : “Thy son,  
“O King, will reign ere his life be done  
“over a land to which thy sway  
“is as a single furrow lean  
“amid a million sprouting green  
“in the young fields, like all Cathay  
“to a mule’s journey in a day.”

The monarch mused at this strange speech,  
but the wise men would no more teach,  
till he, the wisest and the oldest,

nearest to death and eke the boldest,  
who drawing near, in the King's ear  
whispered, like Balaam in the tale :  
" Thy son, O King, the stars have said,  
" will follow the sect that most you hate,  
" and nothing will his love abate  
" and never will his faith grow pale."  
The King thought : " Now indeed I will  
" against the wild stars' course prevail ;  
" my son shall taste not of the ill  
" that haunts the common race of man,  
" nor aught of the cursèd creed shall know  
" whence all things vile and evil flow."  
Therefore, he bade his slaves to build  
'mid spacious trees a palace fair,  
guarded without, and inside filled  
with all things loveliest and most rare.  
And ministers he sent to lead  
his son's first steps, and none might dare  
speak of disease, old age, or death,  
or poverty, and his court indeed  
was comely and sage in the flower of age,  
drawing a quiet, equal breath.  
If any ailed, straightway his place  
was taken by one as fair of face,  
and the King's son told that round the throne  
men bloomed or fell like flowers alone ;  
and of the Christian creed no word  
within those marble halls was heard.  
Thus acted Abenner, the King,  
and saw, but saw not anything,  
and heard, but understood no word.  
Meanwhile his son from childhood grew

towards youth and hardly aught he knew,  
but in his face the virtues shone  
and from his eyes an even mind  
smiled forth his comely world upon :  
yet he wanted, sought, and could not find  
that knowledge which the foolish King,  
shooting his arrows toward the skies,  
bade still conceal from his son's eyes,  
who ever craved for the unknown thing.  
It happened that upon a day  
he found himself at the tennis play,  
alone with one whom above all  
his ministers he loved the best,  
and as back and forward sped the ball  
he watched his time and hit it away  
outside the walls and called with zest :  
“ Heigh-ho, the ball has gone to see  
“ what things in the world without may be ;  
“ yet the King's son must ever stay  
“ within his prison walls ; I pray  
“ you, Zardan, tell me why just here  
“ I must grow like a flower from year to year,  
“ guarded by you from the unknown ? ”  
“ Your father orders it, O Prince.”  
“ I know, I know, but methinks I've shown,  
“ these years we twain have together grown,  
“ that not ungrateful, not unkind  
“ is the Prince by some strange whim confined.  
“ Tell me and friendship shall be yours,  
“ sworn by a Prince whose word endures.”  
Then Zardan told him of the truth ;  
his father's love and his desire  
that his son from childhood on to youth,

from youth to manhood should be free  
 from all the ills of humanity.  
 But not as yet did Zardan dare  
 tell Joasaph what these things were.  
 So the Prince thanked him and went forth  
 with lighter heart from the tennis court ;  
 and often now his father sought,  
 watching his face till the day when wrath  
 dwelt not therein. Then, " Why am I,  
 " dear Father, hid from the earth and the sky ?  
 " always I mourn and dark unrest  
 " forever rends my suffering breast ! "  
 Then the King answered : " Dear my son,  
 " this loving you full well I have done  
 " that all your life through there should be for you  
 " nothing but joy without alloy,  
 " pleasure of body, joy of soul.  
 " Closed in your palace I'd have you drain  
 " the cup of all pleasure and I would strain  
 " from the golden juice the lees of pain."  
 Joasaph answered : " Alas, the whole  
 " of my life is longing, and nought can cure  
 " this pain that will evermore endure,  
 " till like another man I may  
 " fare forth and meet the world on its way."  
 Then sick and sorry at heart the King  
 bethought him that all his love did bring  
 his son no pleasure, and he might die  
 shut up against his will from the sky.  
 Therefore, he ordered slaves and horses,  
 chariots and men at arms to stand  
 ready to follow the free courses  
 which Joasaph should deign command.

But his father's dream he yet would follow,  
though his son flit forth like a new-fledged swallow.  
And, "Let none dare ought of evil shew  
"my son nor speak of any woe!  
"roses and smiles wherever he tread,  
"and let the maidens lips be red,  
"and flutes and timbrels haunt the groves  
"wherein his princely fancy roves,  
"and at the opening of some glade  
"some pleasant comedy be played,  
"and let the utmost of your thought  
"to please and glad my son be brought.  
"For lo, I build a golden screen  
"Prince Joasaph and the world between."  
Thus spake Abenner, and Joasaph now  
might fare forth with a smoother brow.  
Wherever he went on every hand  
shone forth the brightest of the land.  
And oft he mounted on his steed  
and to his councillors gave no heed,  
but sped along upon the wind,  
musing with open, happy mind.  
And always as towards a village clearing  
him as the folk saw quickly nearing,  
smiles and flags did flaunt in the air  
and joy was summoned everywhere.  
But at the turning of a way,  
it happed upon a fateful day,  
he saw one dragged, one pushed before,  
and heard the closing of a door,  
as though some precious thing were there.  
Then riding up to the threshold ere  
his followers knew what he would do,

he cried with a loud voice : " Ho ! within ;  
" the King's son waits, who would speak with you."  
Then the door creaked, and cracked and thin  
answered a voice : " We dare not open,  
" O Joasaph, for the King's word spoken.  
" I am old and blind, and a leper lies  
" at my feet who is made of miseries."  
But " Open, open " cried out the youth ;  
then the hinges creaked and the door stood ajar :  
and the fates shewed, cruel as they are.  
He saw the blind man staring out  
and the leper swathed in rags about.  
Thus knew he the other half of the truth,  
and the form of his countenance was wrought  
to another shape by the strange new thought.  
Then he harkened with a hard-drawn breath  
as Zardan told of sorrow and death,  
pressed him with questions : " Can a man know  
" he will die when his age is so and so ?  
" Can he tell if sickness wait for him  
" or bright health ever play on the brim  
" of the cup of life ? And whither we pass  
" when life is ended, and why, alas,  
" is the world thus choked and sown with woe,  
" and who can deliver those that grow  
" older in all misfortune while  
" others the laughing years beguile  
" with lutes and songs and roses red  
" lilies and maidens with stooped head ;  
" fragrant the maiden as the flower  
" and each made new for each new hour ? "  
Then Zardan answered as one would  
who weaned a child from his childhood.



“But for the woe and the end of all  
“and what hereafter may befall  
“us men who have lived on earth our day,  
“one sect there is that follows Christ,  
“the Son of God, and the narrow way :  
“they are meek and poor and are baptized :  
“this holds the truth and the rest is lies.  
“But the King from out the utmost bourne  
“of his kingdom has driven the heads that are  
    shorn,  
“the long brown robe and the girdle of rope.”  
Then the Prince gazed in Zardan’s eyes,  
and with the light of the star of hope  
dancing in his did ask him more  
of the Christian sect and the God they adore,  
of the Mother of Christ, and how they came  
the truth to guard like a sacred flame.  
But Zardan had told him all he knew,  
and daily the young Prince sadder grew,  
cared not for dances, songs nor all  
those joys that the budding youth enthrall,  
drave off his courtiers, and would eat  
dry bread alone, nor would he deign  
ease the brown girls of their amorous pain,  
treading their roses under his feet.  
Then, from the deep blue vault of the sky,  
fell upon Joasaph that eye  
which sleeps not and beholdeth all,  
and fain would save and fain make known  
the path that of all paths alone  
from earth leads upward to His throne.  
And in this wise the thing befell.  
In the solitudes of Sennaar

a monk there dwelt who was wiser far  
than all his fellows : to him by night  
came dreams from heaven which bade him seek  
the land of India that he might  
to the King's own son reveal the light,  
who in the toils of sin was weak.  
Then Barlaam (for thus the monk was hight),  
being by the word divine aware  
of the aching heart of Joasaph,  
returned to the age, and for his wear  
gat he a merchant's robe and staff,  
the gifts of God, and setting sail  
to India came and sought out there  
the town where Joasaph did dwell.  
And when he knew it journeyed thither  
and there he dwelt, a quiet liver,  
and those who questioned him did tell  
the tale of a wondrous gem to sell.  
But this to no one would he show,  
save, as he said, to some great prince who  
the worth of the precious gem would know  
and pay the merchant all his due.  
Now this he did to prepare the road  
which led to Joasaph's abode ;  
and Zardan the faithful and the old,  
of whom before in the tale was told,  
heard of the merchant and his gem,  
and seeking Barlaam said to him :  
" What, sir, is then this gem so rare  
" that you bring from far and will show to none ?  
" is there the like found anywhere,  
" or is your stone the only one ? "  
Then Barlaam answered in this wise :

"To sell my sparkling merchandise,  
 "I have climbed the waves and have dared the rage  
 "of the tempests that in the ocean are ;  
 "my jewel is the only one  
 "in all the world, and I will engage  
 "unto the Prince the same to give,  
 "for indeed it is a magic stone,  
 "fit for great prince's hand alone."  
 Then answered Zardan : "As I live,  
 "you shall come to the Prince and shall reveal  
 "to him the virtues of the jewel ;  
 "but tell me first and let me see  
 "what virtues in the stone may be."  
 "The stone," said Barlaam, "will straightway heal  
 "all ills of the body and the mind,  
 "make wise the foolish, and make hear  
 "the deaf, and make the dumb to find  
 "their speech and more ; it will make kind  
 "the hearts that hate ; and the hearts that fear  
 "will happy grow ; all these in the stone  
 "are virtues that I will make known  
 "to your lord the Prince."  
 Then Zardan said :  
 "All honours light upon your head.  
 "But first to me the jewel show,  
 "and then together we shall go  
 "to the Prince himself." Then Barlaam sighed :  
 "Alas that your prayer must be denied.  
 "For lo ! I have told you of the good  
 "which the stone can work for sicklihood  
 "of mind or body ; but in the eye,  
 "if any evil humour lie,  
 "and one look on it, then fares he ill,

“for the darkness of night his world doth fill.  
“Or again, if any upon the gem  
“gaze, and his body be not as pure  
“as the lilies that bloom upon their stem,  
“then hardly may his life endure ;  
“for the jewel will parch and burn his blood,  
“like the sun the flats of the river mud.  
“And pardon me, sir, but methinks in your gaze,  
“though purer than many, is yet a haze  
“which floats between you and the upper sky.”  
“If that is indeed the truth, not I  
“will view the jewel ; but come with me  
“and straightway you the Prince shall see,  
“and to His Highness yourself make known  
“the virtues of the precious stone,”  
said Zardan. And soon the Prince they found,  
lying upon a mat on the ground,  
who idly within his fingers wound  
the silk strings of a golden purse,  
and by his side stood a page to rehearse  
those tales that India’s childhood nurse.  
Then Zardan entered : “Peace to you,”  
said the Prince, as the pair made reverence due.  
He spoke and raised him from his place.  
Then Zardan : “May I beg your grace  
“to see this merchant, and hear him tell  
“of his jewel with the magic spell.”  
Then the Prince, touched by the word divine,  
smiled, and without a word made sign  
to Zardan that he should retire.  
“O peace be with you, mighty Prince ;”  
“And peace with you, O man of God ;  
“it seems a thousand ages since

“I knew you, and yet not before  
“my palace steps your feet have trod.  
“You have a jewel rich and rare ;  
“I know it, for I see it there  
“a-glittering in your eyes, which through me  
“pierce like a sword that would undo me.  
“Reveal to me your sacred lore  
“which all these years my thoughts adore  
“and fain would reach, where now it lies  
“hidden, yet shining, in your eyes.”  
“No merchant indeed, O Prince, I am,  
“and mine no mortal merchandise  
“to sell, but the Christian monk Barlaam.”  
But first I would make proof of you  
before the secret you may come to.  
“A sower once went forth to sow  
“and as he went his seed did throw,  
“and some the birds caught up as it lay  
“upon the open hard highway,  
“and some fell in the rocky places,  
“some among thorns in desert spaces.  
“These all must perish, but some there fell  
“in the good soil and prospered well,  
“bringing forth fruit an hundredfold.  
“May you, O Prince, even so enfold  
“the truth in you as it is told  
“of the good soil.” Then the Prince said,  
“O Barlaam, when your name was spoke,  
“meseemed the silence then was broke  
“that weighed a century o’er my head ;  
“as no mere merchant stand you there,  
“but as an heavenly messenger.”  
Then answered Barlaam : “You do well,

“ O Prince, thus soon my end to tell,  
“ and now I will discourse to you  
“ of another Prince who also knew  
“ that the robe and the wearer may be two.  
“ He was a mighty king, and riding  
“ in his golden chariot on a day,  
“ espied two beggars past him striding,  
“ two beggars habited in torn  
“ garments and faces long outworn  
“ with the cruel ravage of disease.  
“ Then sprang the King down from his chariot,  
“ and before those starvelings on his knees  
“ their blessing and their pardon sought.  
“ But the great men who were of his suite  
“ held it by no means fair or meet  
“ that the dignity of the diadem  
“ and the ample sweep of the Kingdom’s hem  
“ before two beggars’ feet should lie.  
“ But they, not daring to make plain  
“ to the King what vexed them, straight did hie  
“ to the Prince his brother, that he again  
“ should tell the King ; and thus there came  
“ to the monarch’s ears the word of blame.  
“ Now the custom in this land was so,  
“ when the King willed a man should die,  
“ that a trumpeter a blast should blow  
“ before his door. As evening drew  
“ her soft grey veil across the sky,  
“ before his brother’s guarded door  
“ sounded the trump : and thus he knew  
“ that on the morrow he must die.  
“ So with the night his vigil grew,  
“ for never again would the sun’s gold mane

“spread glory for him in the East again,  
“nor the sweet company of the birds  
“for him give out their soul-sent words  
“as he sat in his summer paradise,  
“where the blue sky peeps and the wood-breeze  
sighs.  
“Then with wild hair, and all forlorn,  
“called he for sombre garb, and at dawn,  
“girdled with sorrow, robed in woe,  
“he and his wife and children go  
“to the wide palace of the King,  
“where hardly yet does the gilding fling  
gold to pay back the gold of the sun ;  
“and the guards are sleeping every one.  
“They stand in the court of the King’s palace,  
“black their robes, and white is the face  
“of the wife, and the tiny children’s grace  
“all fled away in the great fear  
“of the mystery that is so near.  
“But lo, from the golden gate comes forth  
“the King, the brother, no sign of wrath  
“marked on his kind imperial face,  
“where the hand of power and of time can trace  
“only the lines which deeper growing,  
“make clear within the bright soul glowing.  
“And, ‘ Brother mine, rise up,’ he cried,  
“‘ rise up, my sister, do not dread  
“‘ aught ill from me for our loved one’s head.  
“‘ How know ye not that the trumpet lied,  
“‘ who have sat by me upon my throne,  
“‘ counting the years flit by each one,  
“‘ equal and loving, brother and friend ?  
“‘ Why thought you then that such love would end ?

“ ‘ You who have done all good to me,  
“ ‘ how came you not the fraud to see?  
“ ‘ But since you such great fear did show,  
“ ‘ how was it, brother, you did not know  
“ ‘ when in the dust I lay before  
“ ‘ those beggars, I who have sinned so sore  
“ ‘ against God’s wisdom and God’s law,  
“ ‘ that those were heralds sent from heaven,  
“ ‘ before whose feet great kings must even  
“ ‘ bow down like common men, and crave  
“ ‘ His pardon who alone can save?  
“ ‘ Therefore I sent the trumpeter  
“ ‘ that his shrill blast should wake your soul  
“ ‘ now wandering night-wrapped from the goal.  
“ ‘ As for my courtiers, I will make  
“ ‘ a trial of them for your sake.’  
“ ‘ Therewith he bad his workmen build  
“ ‘ four caskets, two embossed in gold,  
“ ‘ two smeared with pitch ; the first he filled  
“ ‘ with dead man’s bones, but the second hold  
“ ‘ unguents and perfumes and rare gems  
“ ‘ and cloth of silver, such as hems  
“ ‘ the queen’s robe, weary of the yellow.  
“ ‘ Then he called in turn each lordly fellow,  
“ ‘ and asked him : ‘ Of these caskets which  
“ ‘ are the more excellent, those of pitch  
“ ‘ or the other sort?’ Then each one owns  
“ ‘ that he loves best the rotten bones.  
“ ‘ ‘ Open the caskets,’ bids the King.  
“ ‘ And straightway from the golden cases  
“ ‘ strikes a foul odour in their faces,  
“ ‘ while from the pitch-smeared scents take wing  
“ ‘ as from wet roses in young spring.



" The jewels wink and smile in the sun,  
 " and the courtiers shamefaced every one  
 " will bow and smile but wish the while  
 " that they indeed were very far.  
 " " Symbols of man these caskets are,'  
 " declared the King, ' the first are clad  
 " ' in power and glory and cloth of gold,  
 " ' but in their hearts they do but hold  
 " ' corpses of sin and of all things bad.  
 " ' But of the others which glitter there,  
 " ' foul caskets teeming with jewels rare,  
 " ' these are those vagabonds whom I  
 " ' looking upon with the spirit's eye,  
 " ' saw their fair souls their rags shine through,  
 " ' and therefore knelt that I might do  
 " ' them honour and but touch the hem  
 " ' of the spirit's robes which covered them :  
 " ' aye purple robes their spirits wore  
 " ' and they were glorious o'er and o'er.'  
 " Thus spoke that King, and in this wise  
 " he taught them to distrust their eyes,  
 " too apt to snatch at the things of sense,  
 " but rather to use intelligence,  
 " which like a torch-light leads the soul  
 " step by step to its distant goal."  
 Thus ended Barlaam : and " Fair is the flow,  
 " sweet saint, of your discourse, but I would know "  
 (said Joasaph) " who is the God  
 " that sent the sower forth to sow  
 " and shines on all you say as the sun  
 " on the traveller's footsteps one by one  
 " as the weary leagues for home are trod."  
 " If you would know who is my Lord,"

said Barlaam, " He is Christ the unique  
" Son of God, He is the Word,  
" He is sole blessed, sole immortal,  
" in Him is refuge for the weak,  
" He dwells in light beyond the portal  
" with the Father and the Paraclete,  
" whom all to worship is most meet.  
" For One in three and three in One,  
" more blinding than the noonday sun  
" together does their Godhead run  
" and veils them from our purblind sight.  
" Three Persons in one perfect light,  
" knowing no end and no beginning,  
" eternal, changeless, uncreate,  
" bodiless, ignorant of sinning,  
" though knowing all ; who did create  
" all that we see and may not see  
" from nothing ; and first He made to be  
" the countless company of powers  
" invisible which haunt the air  
" and mock our vision everywhere.  
" And next He shaped this world of ours,  
" the earth, the sea, and the deep sky,  
" and adorned them with a joyful light—  
" even the shining from on high  
" of the sun by day and the moon by night.  
" He filled the earth with the beasts that play,  
" and the sea with the fishes that make their way  
" rhythmically, mysteriously  
" through the caves and palaces under the waves ;  
" He spoke and all these were.  
" But afterwards He made Him man  
" with the earth's dust and breathed His soul

“into the dust, so that there ran  
“the quickening impulse of the divine  
“through him and therewith full control  
“of his own will and power to think  
“and save himself upon the brink,  
“where fell the countless herd of swine.  
“Next, woman, of man’s rib He made,  
“that she should be for him to aid.  
“And over all things man He set,  
“and made for him a paradise  
“where all things good and lovely met;  
“Eden he called it, and it lies  
“in a far valley towards the East;  
“and there God placed each kind of beast,  
“and in the woodland many a bird  
“flitted from bowing tree to tree  
“all innocent as man might be  
“now, had he harkened to the word  
“that was spoken to him by the Lord.  
“‘For in the garden one tree is  
“‘and the fruit of it is the fruit of death,  
“‘therefore eat not of that,’ God saith.  
“And Adam now indeed I wis  
“were innocent and living still  
“in that fair Garden free of ill,  
“save for the evil serpent’s wooing  
“who talked with Eve for her undoing;  
“one of the heavenly host was he,  
“mighty in mighty company,  
“and free of will like man created  
“his Maker from of old he hated.  
“Therefore from heaven God him hurled;  
“he fell to rule the infernal world,

"and fallen thus, he envied man,  
 "and being wise conceived a plan  
 "which should ruin Adam and ruin Eve  
 "and drive them forth to toil and grieve.  
 "Therefore a subtle snake disguised  
 "from Hell to Eden Satan hied  
 "and worked on Eve to taste the fruit,  
 "and be wise like a goddess in high heaven.  
 "And Adam yielding to her suit  
 "also did eat, and both were driven  
 "to wander, multiply, and die,  
 "wringing vain hands beneath blind sky.  
 "And the deeper plunged were men in evil  
 "always the more rejoiced the devil,  
 "who with his wealth of sin innate  
 "man's soul did ever the more inflate.  
 "And God when He sees that the wide world  
 "in Satan's meshes is enfurled  
 "pours forth His waters from the skies  
 "and in the waves the whole earth lies.  
 "But Noah with his family gat  
 "an ark of wood, and they did float  
 "till on the mount of Ararat  
 "touched earth at last the world's own boat.  
 "But of Noah evil men were born  
 "who held that in blind chance alone  
 "the hand of providence was shown,  
 "jeering at God with lip of scorn:  
 "others that in the stars of birth  
 "is shadowed forth man's course on earth;  
 "and some adored the moon and the sun,  
 "or the stars which their fixed courses run;  
 "some fire, some reptiles, and some brought

“ to the carved idol, paint-besmeared,  
“ vile things, to vileness thus endeared  
“ the homage of their vagrant thought.  
“ And having made these images  
“ endowed they them with all foul that is  
“ in the heart of man ; for some, they said,  
“ were thieves and beggars, envious,  
“ irascible, and some struck dead  
“ brother or father, some were slaves,  
“ some wounded, some had given forth groans,  
“ and all were criminals or knaves.  
“ Alone throughout that impious age  
“ did Abraham his mind engage  
“ to find the hider of things hidden  
“ beyond the range of human vision.  
“ For when he saw sea, sky, and earth,  
“ the sun, the moon, and every star,  
“ each fixed and ordered from its birth,  
“ he knew that by no accident  
“ these things had happened as they are.  
“ But God he recognised in all,  
“ and knew that He can make to fall,  
“ He only build again, and sent  
“ by the angels’ stair his prayer to heaven.  
“ Then God said : ‘ Now, indeed, I am  
“ ‘ well pleased with this man Abraham,  
“ ‘ and he and his shall prosper even  
“ ‘ a thousandfold, and they shall be  
“ ‘ the race peculiar unto Me.’  
“ Thus spoke the Lord, and led them forth  
“ from the land of Egypt, where the wrath  
“ of Pharaoh schemed all manner of ill ;  
“ but with full measure God did fill

"the cup of Egypt's suffering—  
 "plagued with all plagues, and when the  
     sea  
 "had stood aside and let there be  
 "dry land for Israel's pilgriming,  
 "and Pharaoh followed with his host,  
 "then the waves met and all was lost.  
 "Thus Moses and Aaron led the race  
 "beloved of God for a long space  
 "into the wilderness, and God wrought  
 "strange miracles ; with heavenly bread  
 "He fed them, and Moses from the Mount  
 "tables of stone unblinded brought,  
 "from which all future ages count—  
 "the law of right, the law of wrong.  
 "And after wanderings weary and long  
 "the Lord His chosen people led  
 "to the land so long since promised  
 "to Abraham and his seed,  
 "to the land with milk and honey flowing,  
 "with all green trees and fair fruits growing,  
 "to the promised land indeed.  
 "But always in the mind of man  
 "the devil's words of poison ran :  
 "grim death usurped the throne of the world ;  
 "and by their wilful error hurled  
 "to hell, mankind must groan for aye.  
 "When therefore in such pitiful way  
 "God saw His own fair handiwork,  
 "His only Son, of His great love  
 "He sent to His servants from above.  
 "For thirty years thus Jesus taught,  
 "and many to salvation brought,

"and in the waters of the Jordan  
 "He was baptized by St. John;  
 "and, like the coming of a dove  
 "the Holy Spirit from above  
 "lit upon Him, and a voice did cry,  
 "'This is my Son, well pleased am I.'  
 "Thenceforward many signs and great  
 "wrought Christ, for the dead to life did come,  
 "the blind He did illuminate,  
 "drove forth the demon, healed the dumb,  
 "made the deaf hear, and lepers cleansed,  
 "renewing everywhere the strain  
 "of goodness in mankind again,  
 "and from vain joys and things diurnal  
 "taught men to look for the life eternal.  
 "And therefore chose He from the rest  
 "Apostles twelve He loved the best.  
 "And His fame like flame spread through the land,  
 "and signs and wonders for a brand  
 "stamped true His words of prophecy.  
 "Then the Jews would kill Him, and suborned  
 "Judas, whom Jesus had adorned  
 "with His fair friendship, and had chosen  
 "among the twelve. This man they cozen  
 "with promise of a pitiful fee,  
 "and the Lord Jesus he will yield  
 "for the price of a gibbet in a field,  
 "where Judas goes to hang himself.  
 "Thus in the Gentile's hands does He  
 "suffer all evil patiently,  
 "nailed to the arms of the cruel tree,  
 "where in the *human* nature taken  
 "to save the world, His frame was shaken,

" but the *divine* did aye remain  
 " free from all cognisance of pain.  
 " And so it happed on the abhorred  
 " Cross was crucified the Lord  
 " Christ Jesus, and to Hell descended,  
 " where crowds of suffering souls attended  
 " His footsteps, and the Lord of the land  
 " must yield to his overlord's command,  
 " set free those souls of the just in Hell,  
 " and lo, they fly in Heaven to dwell !  
 " and the third day He rose again,  
 " conqueror of death and sin and pain,  
 " and when the forty days were ended  
 " again to Heaven He ascended,  
 " and sits at the right hand of the Lord,  
 " whence He will come again to earth  
 " to judge the living and the dead,  
 " and render to each man his worth.  
 " And afterwards the Ghostly Word  
 " came on the Apostles and inspired  
 " the spirit of all speech in them,  
 " and on their heads the tongues of flame  
 " wavered and waxed or waned as came  
 " with God's own breath the inspirations ;  
 " and they went forth to teach the nations."  
 As Barlaam ended, swarm on swarm,  
 like bees for honey, or after storm  
 rapacious sea birds seeking food,  
 came the Prince's questions : " Are all men good  
 " by nature ? Wherefore did the Lord  
 " when all was in His power seek  
 " to bind man to Him with a word ?  
 " And the Lord Jesus, why so meek ? "



When all were answered and the mind  
of the fair Prince some rest could find,  
then Barlaam taught him of the virtue  
in Baptism lies, and how 'tis due  
each Christian be baptized, "for  
"even now perchance is Death at the door,  
"and he who unbaptized dies  
"plays fast and loose with Paradise."  
As rung this warning in his ears  
burst forth the Prince with contrite tears,  
clung to the monk and aye implored him,  
gently spake Barlaam and restored him,  
and from the fountain in the court,  
where then they stood, some drops he caught  
in his hollow hand and made the sign  
of the cross and spake the words divine.  
"And though thy sins be as a million,  
"though they glare forth as doth vermilion,  
"they will be whitened like as snow ;  
"though coloured purple, white as wool."  
Then Barlaam made the Prince to know  
how that the world of sense was full  
of all temptations, and the end  
only despair and death and loss  
for those who followed not the Cross,  
and told the tale of the man who fell  
through fear of death into a well.  
He from an unicorn did flee  
and heeded not the well till he  
had fallen therein, but caught perchance  
on his downward path at the little branch  
of a tree that clung within a crevice ;  
and deep below in the abyss

he gazing sees a dragon lying  
him with red cruel eyes espying ;  
and by the stone where his toes do rest  
an aspic with a fourfold crest,  
while the frail branch to which he clings  
as over the abyss it swings,  
two mice, one white and the other black,  
behold ! with busy jaws attack.  
But lo ! some drops of honey slipping  
adown the bough he would be lipping  
(for ah ! so sweet), and at once with scorn  
drives from his thoughts the unicorn,  
the mice, the aspic's fourfold crest,  
the waiting dragon and the rest,  
and only thinks how he shall try  
some drops of the honey to come by.  
The unicorn, O Prince, is death,  
the well is the world, where every breath  
is drawn in peril, the two mice  
are the night and the day which eat away  
the branch of life, and the honey dripping  
the joys of the world which man entice,  
yet always from his lips are slipping.  
The aspic with the fourfold crest  
figures the elements at rest  
within our body, which resolvèd  
the human frame is quick dissolvèd.  
The dragon, cruel and flamboyant,  
is the vast belly of Hell aye waiting  
for those who in lust's arms do pant,  
careless of all but pleasure's sating.  
Then said the Prince, " How veritable,  
" how artful is this pictured fable !

"Cease not, I pray, such tropes to turn,  
 "that I may diligently learn  
 "the nature of our life on earth  
 "and what to those who love it worth."  
 Answered the Ancient: "Earthly lovers  
 "and such as the hood of lust aye covers  
 "preferring things that are fluid, frangible  
 "to joys celestial, real, and tangible,  
 "are as the man who had three friends.  
 "And two he loved and to them he gave  
 "gold and silver and all things brave  
 "that he possessed, but the third alway  
 "he passed off with a smile and a nay.  
 "But the day came when he was brought  
 "before the King in his judgment court  
 "and ordered to find security  
 "for a great sum: then speedily  
 "he seeks the first, and the first can lend  
 "but a single garment to his friend.  
 "And the second said: 'I will come with you  
 "part of the road towards the King,  
 "but further I cannot, for it is due  
 "some business to an end I bring.'  
 "Then at the last he sought that third,  
 "and humbly with many a pleading word  
 "craved pardon for his friendlessness,  
 "pleaded for aid in his distress.  
 "Then the friend said: 'I will go before  
 "and with all my power the King implore.'  
 "The first of the friends is wealth, the second  
 "children and wife, but the third friend  
 "on whom that sufferer scarce had reckoned  
 "is Good Works faithful to the end.

" For what will a man not do for gold ?  
 " Hunger and thirst and heat and cold  
 " and his very life in the scale he'll cast  
 " so that much gold be his at the last.  
 " And what the profit ?—a winding-sheet ;  
 " but *that* the worms will likewise eat.  
 " And what of the second ?—children and wives  
 " and kinsmen, for whom we risk the lives  
 " of soul and body, but when we die  
 " what profit have we ?—their company  
 " to the sepulchre ; but see them hie  
 " back to the world of things that be,  
 " not less the dead one's memory hiding  
 " than the tomb the place of his abiding.  
 " But the third friend whom we requited  
 " hardly with thanks, his friendship slighted.  
 " He is the troop of our good deeds ;  
 " hope, faith and charity and alms  
 " and pity, and himself precedes  
 " us to the Judgment Seat and calms  
 " the wrath of God, and he disarms  
 " our cruel enemies which wait  
 " to accuse us at the dreadful gate  
 " and claim the utmost of their due,  
 " which he will pay for me, for you,  
 " forgetting as true friend forgets  
 " that from his store he pays our debts."  
 Thereat said Joasaph : " May the Lord  
 " bless thee, O learned one, whose voice  
 " maketh the soul in me rejoice,  
 " and if it please thee, in a word  
 " paint me the vanity of the world  
 " and how a man may sojourn there

“without he be in sin enfurled.”  
Then Barlaam told of the king of the year.  
“In a certain city the custom was  
“to crown a stranger without fear ;  
“and when the ermine lay across  
“his shoulders and the diadem  
“gleamed on his brow, secure in them  
“each thought in turn : ‘ Now indeed am I  
“‘ free of the land and shall ever reign  
“‘ till the time come for me to die.’  
“Thus mused those fools in fancies vain :  
“for at the end of the year the power  
“and the wealth were taken, and each one sent  
“to a lone isle in banishment.  
“But once it chanced that the king of the hour  
“was wise in time, and sent before  
“clothing and food and a great store  
“of the choice faring of a king ;  
“so that when came the end of the year,  
“stripped of all, yet with goodly cheer  
“he went to the island of banishment,  
“nor lacked he there for anything,  
“living in everlasting joy,  
“while those, his foolish predecessors,  
“who had not sent thither of their treasures,  
“cold, famine, and disease destroy.  
“Now the world is the city of the tale,  
“devils the burghers, men the kings,  
“born for the most part vain and frail,  
“whom the fiend’s cunning oft-times brings  
“to set no store on the time before,  
“but dwelling all in things diurnal  
“they do forget the life eternal.”

Then asked the Prince, "Since all you say  
 "is true, and clearer than the day  
 "the faith of Christ; why doth the King  
 "my father seek the monks to slay  
 "and the true faith to nothing bring?"  
 Then Barlaam answered in this wise:  
 "Truth oft-times in example lies;  
 "and I will tell you of a king  
 "who ruled well in everything,  
 "save that he had not faith; one night  
 "his Vizier and the King did creep  
 "forth in disguise, when most did sleep,  
 "to roam the city; and soon caught sight  
 "of a light in a hut, and drawing near  
 "beheld two beggars rag-beclad,  
 "dancing and singing with much cheer.  
 "'How comes it that these fools are glad?'  
 "queried the King, 'when you and I  
 "'with all our wealth and power have had  
 "'but joys which by their joy are sad.'  
 "'What think you of their life, O King?'  
 "answered the Vizier; 'May I die  
 "'if ever aught so filthy, vile  
 "'our kingly gaze has dared defile,'  
 "said the King; and the Vizier: 'Know, O King,  
 "that just so vile, so mean a thing,  
 "'our life must seem to the Most High  
 "'as theirs whose rags and joy came nigh  
 "'troubling your regal mood. Alone  
 "'those treasures weigh which endure away  
 "'—belief in God and in His Son.'"  
 This of the faith and this one more  
 told Barlaam of his copious store.

" A merchant once his son affianced  
 " to a damsel glittering o'er and o'er  
 " with wealth and beauty and allied  
 " to all that merchants hold most high ;  
 " but, for he loved her not, the son  
 " took flight, and as he fled came nigh  
 " to a woodman's hut where a fair maid  
 " worked with her hands, and working made  
 " much thanks to God : and when he asks  
 " why toiling 'mid ungrateful tasks  
 " she praises God ; thus she replies :  
 " ' For the chance of entering Paradise.'  
 " Struck to the heart, the traveller now  
 " would make her his with many a vow.  
 " But her father saith him, ' Nay, for you  
 " ' are rich and splendid, and the due  
 " ' of the poor is marriage with the poor.'  
 " Then will the young man make him sure  
 " of the fair maid, so throws in the air  
 " turban begemmed, nor yet will spare  
 " his brodered cloak, and dons such weed  
 " as wears the woodman's self indeed.  
 " And in the house he craves to stay  
 " working with them until the day  
 " the father smiles and touched to see  
 " such labour and such constancy  
 " gives him his daughter and a treasure  
 " worth all the gold in the world together."  
 " Such treasure, Barlaam, finding you  
 " I find," said Joasaph, " but how grew  
 " the faith, I know not, in my breast,  
 " so late with fears and doubts oppressed."  
 " Many are the ways that God

" leads those He loves to Him, you trod  
 " the path direct, the royal road,  
 " yours is a special grace bestowed,"  
 said Barlaam, " and the little tale  
 " of the churl, how he caught the nightingale,  
 " will serve to show when faith may fail.  
 " Once a churl snared a nightingale,  
 " and as the brown bird throbbed in his hand :  
 " ' Sir,' said he, ' if you let me free  
 " ' three wisdoms you shall understand.'  
 " He promised, and ' The first is this,'  
 " said the bird, " attempt but what you can " ;  
 " ' the second, " ne'er regret the past " ;  
 " " believe no lies," that is the last.'  
 " Then the churl set free the bird,  
 " and as she flew in the air she cried :  
 " ' O fool that hast my wisdoms heard,  
 " ' thyself great treasure hast denied.  
 " ' For in my body a margaret  
 " ' lieth which is indeed as great  
 " ' as an ostrich egg' ; thereat the man  
 " believed the bird and sorrowed sore  
 " because the same he had no more.  
 " So he cried softly : ' Come again  
 " ' into my hand, dear little bird,  
 " ' the better thy wisdoms to explain,  
 " ' and thee with all humanity  
 " ' will I entreat and set thee free,  
 " ' when again thy wisdoms I have heard.'  
 " Thereat the bird : ' Now well I know :  
 " ' thou art a fool, for that thou hast  
 " ' my wisdoms three thus let go waste.  
 " ' For much thou longest for me now



“ ‘high perched above thy head on the bough ;  
“ ‘and thinkest in my body small  
“ ‘to find an egg more large than all.’  
“ Thus mocked the bird that churl indeed,  
“ and those may mock of the Christian creed  
“ at such as in the painted face  
“ of some vain idol seek for grace.”  
Then the Prince thanked Barlaam that he  
adorned the faith thus cunningly  
with stories like a brodered border  
which frame the picture’s comely order.  
Joasaph looked at the saint and saw  
his deep face furrowed o’er and o’er  
and grey beard almost to the floor ;  
therefore he asked, “ Pray tell me, master,  
“ how many winters’ snows have passed ere  
“ Christ like the dove from heaven alit  
“ upon your mind and kindled it ? ”  
Then Barlaam answered, “ Twelve.”  
“ And for how many years did you dig and delve  
“ the sands of the desert of ignorance  
“ ere the great day of deliverance ? ”  
Then Barlaam answered, “ Not a day ;  
“ for all my living was only dying,  
“ and all my prayers were but as lying,  
“ till the hour came when the tongues of flame  
“ flickered about my cell afar  
“ hid in the desert of Sennaar,  
“ licked the stains of the world away,  
“ purged me throughly and burned the past,  
“ so that my days from first to last  
“ till those were as coal on the furnace cast.  
“ Harken, O Prince, to the tale of one

“ whose life did split, as mine has done.  
“ A Prince was born upon the night  
“ when a fiery star was trailing bright  
“ its tail through heaven, and lo ! the same  
“ broke off and in two parts it came.  
“ Therefore the wise men of the land  
“ foretold that the Prince’s life in twain  
“ would break and the halves quite separate stand,  
“ as things that cannot meet again.  
“ And soon his father died, and he  
“ ruled and lived most royally,  
“ with wars and conquests, many wives ;  
“ living in one short span the lives  
“ of many men, nor marked in the least  
“ the flight of time, but a great feast  
“ each year upon his birthday gave  
“ where all of beautiful and brave  
“ in his wide kingdom ever came  
“ and sung with purple lips his fame  
“ or struck their shields and cried his name.  
“ It happened once as he reclined  
“ on his royal couch and the table lined  
“ with dædal ornaments beheld.  
“ ‘All but my kingly face I see,’  
“ he cried, ‘ bring mirrors ’: so they held  
“ a silver mirror him before.  
“ Then seamed with furrows o’er and o’er  
“ his face and the wild locks of youth  
“ drooping or grey, or fled forsooth  
“ he saw, nor revelled any more,  
“ turning from lies to seek the truth.  
“ Ah, think what it means, O Prince, for you  
“ sunk in the depths of the life of the sense,

"when at last the barriers are broke through,  
"when at last for you outbreaks the intense  
"life of the livers in the truth.  
"Such was it once for me, and my youth  
"rioted, wasted, revelled away,  
"in pleasures frail as the flowers that sway.  
"What is the joy of it like in sooth  
"by the deep inmost uttermost joy  
"which fills my soul without alloy,  
"and now in you is rising, rising  
"and on this day of your baptizing  
"breaks forth with splendours as the sun  
"shining from heaven when night is done?"  
Then said the Prince, "With what you tell,  
"O saint, I feel my soul doth swell  
"to burst its prison; and since you came  
"to save me from a life of shame,  
"take me with you, that dwelling free  
"in the desert with the Lord and thee,  
"in that most admirable life  
"I may save the years of youth and of  
strife."

Then answered Barlaam: "Such request  
"with a parable is answered best.  
"A rich man once a young gazelle  
"kept for his pleasure, and all day  
"the fair slim creature wonted play  
"about the lawns and the woods as well,  
"coming at call, and licked the hand  
"which gave it bread, and pawed the sand.  
"Till suddenly strange longing grew  
"in its breast for freedom, and it knew  
"no peace, till cantering down the glade

“its fellows of the forest, made  
“to share their furry company.  
“So all the day long with the brown throng  
“of the wild gazelle the tame would be,  
“ever returning as night fell  
“to sleep secure where its lord did dwell.  
“But soon the lord said: ‘Where then is fled  
“‘the slim gazelle that I love so well?’  
“And his servants told him, and when he knew  
“he sent them on horseback, and they slew  
“full many of the wild gazelle,  
“and drove back the tame that it should dwell  
“chained in the courtyard of that lord.  
“Thus would it be if you followed me,  
“O Prince, to the desert, for the sword  
“your father wields would sever us,  
“would slay my fellows and ensure  
“for him damnation swift and sure.  
“But you and I are now placed thus  
“that both are safe upon the shore,  
“nor plunge to seek for danger more.  
“Thus a swimmer once and his dear friend  
“sought on a summer day the river  
“which flowing gently past did ever  
“smile as to say: ‘Ay, come and spend  
“‘some minutes in my emerald shallows,  
“‘come where the grass waves by the bank,  
“‘come to the shade of the bowing shallows.’  
“They plunged; one swam, but the other sank,  
“for though the water seemed not deep,  
“yet in the weeds its path did keep  
“treacherously, silently,  
“and in vain the friend the current clove,

“caught at the weeds and wildly strove.  
“Thereat the swimmer drew him near  
“and his heart felt a double fear,  
“first for his friend lest he should drown,  
“next for himself that if he came  
“within his frantic reach the same  
“would drag them both for ever down.  
“Therefore he touched him not, but drew  
“quite near and cried, ‘Strike out like me;  
“‘fear not, but strike out as I say.’  
“Then the friend harkened, in that way  
“both came to shore as you and I;  
“strike for the shore and follow me,  
“but cling not to me, lest you bring  
“both to the death.”

Thus having spoken and explored  
the regions of the faith of the Lord,  
Barlaam withdrew to the hostelry.  
And Zardan coming hastily  
asks of the Prince if this be true  
that the merchant is the hermit who  
comes from the desert of Sennaar  
to preach the Christian faith? The Prince  
answers him: “Ay, and if you will  
“you shall hear this babbler talk his fill.  
“Retire behind the golden curtain  
“when next he comes and thus convince  
“yourself of all: but most, be certain  
“that the words he uses, striving to draw  
“me from our faith, I do abhor.”  
So Zardan, as the Prince had bid,  
behind the golden curtain hid  
on the morrow when the hermit came.

And Joasaph said: "I pray thee, Father,  
 "that I may in one handful gather  
 "the essence of the Christian faith,  
 "in a few words resume the same."  
 Then Barlaam told how we are to love  
 God only all other things above  
 with all our heart and soul and mind  
 and to keep His law with love and fear,  
 who made the visible earthly sphere,  
 likewise the world invisible.  
 And thus and thus did Barlaam bind  
 the various flowers of the faith;  
 then sought again his hostelry.  
 Alone with Zardan, Joasaph saith:  
 "Full vainly spake he of the faith  
 "which kills this beauteous world for us."  
 Thereat said Zardan, "Wherefore try  
 "the truth of your servant, your ally?  
 "Full well I knew that in you grow  
 "the words of the prophet, and indeed  
 "fain would I follow where you lead,  
 "but weak my feet as my faith; and the King  
 "drop by drop my blood will wring  
 "from my writhing body, who brought the stranger  
 "into your Highness's own chamber."  
 Then Joasaph said: "There's no reward  
 "equals the knowledge of the Lord;  
 "therefore it was I hid you here,  
 "and from your speech, alas, 'tis clear  
 "you are far from the faith. But for the King;  
 "I pray you say not anything  
 "of Barlaam or the faith, till reason  
 "shall find for me a fitting season

"all to explain." (But with the sot  
 like seed on water prosper not  
 the words of wisdom.) On the morrow,  
 came with the sunrise, full of sorrow,  
 Barlaam to say farewell. Again  
 the Prince embraced him, and in vain  
 he prayed the saint to take of gold  
 at least so much as his hand would hold.  
 But Barlaam would not; "For," said he,  
 "such things do not exist for me  
 "save by the order of God; I go  
 "back to the desert where we know  
 "not gold from silver save by the glow  
 "of the sand in the sun or the clouds on high,  
 "sailing serene in silver by."  
 But seeing the Prince was very sad,  
 he did him off the robe he wore  
 and the Prince his, and each stood clad  
 in the robe of the other. "More, far more,  
 "than cloth of silver or cloth of gold  
 "is this robe to me," said Joasaph;  
 "for in every seam, in every fold,  
 "of you a memory it hath,  
 "like the leaves of a book which in its creases  
 "speaks of the giver and ever pleases  
 "the heavy heart of the absent one."  
 Then Barlaam raised his hand and prayed  
 to God the Father and the Son  
 and the Holy Ghost that they should aid  
 the young vine planted, and accord  
 that fruit of justice it afford;  
 comforting it and setting free  
 from the devil's wiles and, "may it be,

“ O Lord, inheritor, even with me  
“ of everlasting joy that art  
“ through all the ages throned apart.”  
Having thus his orison completed  
and Joasaph for the last time greeted,  
he left the palace thanking God  
that not in vain his feet had trod  
the devious paths of a strange land.  
Now Zardan, weak and led away  
by the thought of the King, could not withstand  
his conscience crying night and day—  
“ Treason, Treason ! Treason ! Treason !  
“ you have been faithless to your trust.”  
Then sickening as all mortals must  
when a secret sorrow rends and tears,  
Zardan resigned his charge and the cares  
of the watch on the Prince. When Abenner heard  
that Zardan ailed, himself he came,  
wherefore his servant ailed to know.  
Then Zardan’s heart did overflow,  
and “ Sire,” he cried, “ red death alone  
“ can for my fearful fault atone.  
“ A merchant with a precious stone  
“ I brought to the Prince, but it was he  
“ monk Barlaam, Christian, and the Prince  
“ his artful speeches did convince  
“ of the Christian faith ; now let me die,  
“ who am worthless, traitor to my King.”  
Then Abenner sank on a divan  
and spake no word, but his mind did wring  
to find the issue of this thing.  
At last for Araches he sent,  
and asked him as his friend how best



he should purge his son of the Christian pest.  
Araches smiled and smiling went  
his mind in devious thought all round  
the bristling dangers of the case.  
At last he spake: "From before thy face,  
"great King, drive sorrow, for I have found  
"two ways, whereof if the one fail,  
"for sure the other will prevail.  
"Therefore send soldiers who shall seek  
"monk Barlaam, and if he be caught  
"full soon the Prince shall hear how weak  
"is the Christian faith; for with good cheer  
"or else with torments, or their fear,  
"this monk to wisdom shall be brought.  
"But if the miscreant shall escape  
"our vigilance, just such a shape  
"has the mage Nachor, who is wise  
"in all the Christian lore of lies.  
"*He shall be Barlaam*, him refute  
"your priests and sages in dispute,  
"and thus the wandering mind of the Prince  
"his Barlaam's failure shall convince  
"that out of lies alone he tries  
"to weave the ladder to the skies."  
Soon said, soon done, but all in vain  
Barlaam they sought o'er hill and plain;  
therefore went Araches by night  
towards Nachor where alone he dwelt,  
and as a monk was he to sight.  
In few words Araches made clear  
his part to him, and Nachor felt  
that the task was easy done and light,  
for learned was he in Christian lore

and nothing placed in the world before  
his own ease: "And the gold shall pelt  
"on you in torrents, and the King  
"grant all you ask, if you do this thing,"  
said Araches. So as agreed,  
Nachor was bound and in the prison  
thrown as a Christian with derision.  
And the King announced to all around  
that Barlaam the prophet being found,  
all Christians far and near indeed  
might fearless come and of the faith  
discourse, and to his son he saith:  
"Joasaph, now within my keep  
"is Barlaam in a dungeon deep;  
"and though as father and as King  
"you must obey me in everything;  
"yet will I hear what Barlaam saith  
"of the mystery of the Christian faith."  
Said the Prince: "May the will of the Lord  
be done,  
"in Him my soul I do confide,  
"with me His pity shall abide."  
Then heralds went, and everyone  
summoned of Christian, pagan, Jew,  
to the great contest, and but few  
of the latter, and of the Christians one,  
Barachias only, dared appear.  
A monk he was, who knew not fear,  
and by false Nachor stood like day  
which drives the mists of night away.  
And of the pagan's empty creed,  
great was the multitude indeed;  
augurs, magicians and diviners,

and sophists who are lie refiners,  
 pontiffs of vain idolatry,  
 mages of India and Chaldee.  
 Then from his lofty throne uprising  
 spoke Abenner, their throng despising :  
 "One Barlaam monk will now dispute  
 "the Christian faith. You will confute  
 "him utterly and all his sect ;  
 "or *his* the victory and you die  
 "disgracefully, and all you own  
 "to the winds of heaven shall be sown."  
 Thus spoke the King, and Joasaph  
 said, "Sire, your speech much wisdom hath,  
 "let it be even as you say."  
 Then turning him where Nachor stood :  
 "Barlaam," he said (for still he feigned  
 that he in ignorance remained,  
 though clear at once the fraud to him),  
 "From the gods my country holds most good,  
 "you by your honeyed words have turned me  
 "to follow the Christian creed and earned me  
 "my Father's wrath and great distress,  
 "who once did live in happiness.  
 "Now hangs your life in the wavering scale ;  
 "which side it leaneth lies with you,  
 "who are alike the weighed and weigher.  
 "Either you prove Christ's doctrine true  
 "before each pagan vain gainsayer,  
 "and I in the faith will never fail  
 "and all my life through Christ adore  
 "even as you taught me once before ;  
 "or you are conquered—truth or fraud  
 "it matters not—for with these hands

“ I’ll tear your heart and your false tongue  
“ forth from your body and afford  
“ at least a meal to the dog that stands  
“ there in the plain.” Thus Nachor, flung  
into the pit he dug for another,  
pondered awhile and then thought best  
to cleave to the Prince, for well he knew,  
that what he threatened he would do.

When all was ready, one stood forth  
of the pagan crowd and cried : “ Are you  
“ Barlaam, the Christian hermit, who  
“ has spoken lies and dared the wrath  
“ of the king Abenner, lord of Ind,  
“ teaching his son that man has sinned,  
“ and through Christ Jesus crucified  
“ alone he can be purified ?  
“ Methinks that the gods of the cloudy mountain,  
“ the gods of the field and the gods of the fountain,  
“ are better than Christ Jesus tied  
“ to a vile cross, pierced with a sword in the  
side.

“ As though a God who cannot save  
“ himself, to others ever gave  
“ the strength to vanquish and be strong,  
“ the joy of life and dance and song.”  
Then, like the ass of Balaam, broke  
Nachor the silence and thus spoke :  
“ Sire, by the providence of God  
“ this sphere of earth my feet have trod,  
“ and I have looked into the skies,  
“ and strained my poor and mortal eyes  
“ unto the heavenly mysteries,

“and thus I knew that God alone  
“moved all, for the moved is ever less  
“than is the mover ; therefore, I  
“declare the God who oft has shown  
“libation and live sacrifice,  
“to be quite loathsome in His eyes ;  
“no part He hath in visible things,  
“but in Him all have their beginnings.”  
Thus much of the true faith he spoke  
and the three pagan creeds he broke  
into Chaldæan, Greek, Egyptian ;  
“for each of these is the great captain  
“of many lesser which do fashion  
“upon those models human passion.  
“Now the elements to the Chaldee  
“are gods, and in their honour he  
“carves statues from the plastic stone,  
“which statues by the ages mown  
“lie shattered in the sand : ‘ the *sky*  
“‘ is God,’ forsooth, these pagans cry ;  
“though the stars move from sign to sign,  
“and the sky *is* by the work divine  
“of the one great artificer.  
“The *earth* a goddess ! when on her  
“the vilest of creation stamp,  
“she whom the yellow fire consumeth,  
“who rots corrupted by the damp,  
“she who the blood of all the slain  
“must in her fœtid sides contain,  
“she whom the moody sexton doometh  
“with his vile pick to embrace the bones  
“of lepers perished, she who owns  
“no better claim to Godhead than

“ does *water* soiled by beast and man.  
“ *Fire* too they claim for God, and bear  
“ her here and there and everywhere,  
“ make her at will or great or small,  
“ and roast their venison withal !  
“ The *Sun* they worship, who must rise,  
“ and setting every night he dies,  
“ who is far smaller than the sky,  
“ and like the stars by law divine  
“ must move in turn from sign to sign.  
“ The *Moon* a Goddess ! who must lie  
“ under eclipse and wax and wane  
“ and come to the same place again  
“ by heavenly law, no Goddess she—  
“ pale handmaiden of the powers that be.  
“ And *man* they worship ; man whose mood  
“ changes from hour to hour, now good  
“ now bad, now coward now courageous,  
“ now buoyed up with a pride outrageous—  
“ then hurled to earth, in vain repents—  
“ man formed of varying elements,  
“ wearer of raiment, piteous man,  
“ whose utmost life is scarce a span.  
“ Now, an your Highness will, I speak  
“ after the Chaldees, of the Greek.  
“ More madly foolish they than those,  
“ as greater sin from greatness grows.  
“ They find their deities everywhere,  
“ in woods and streams and faces fair,  
“ in storms and seas and shameful faces,  
“ that all which in themselves debases  
“ may find example and escape  
“ in the high gods, who sin the same,

“and mortals sinning dare not blame—  
“murder, adultery, and rape,  
“and crimes too evil for a name.  
“Saturn their elder god is he  
“who lay with Rhea and did devour  
“his children till the fateful hour  
“came Jupiter and gelding him  
“did cast his members on the sea  
“(whereof rose Venus fair and slim);  
“and Saturn bound to Hades hurled—  
“his Father! with the early world.  
“A god in chains! what sorry fable,  
“which to believe what man were able?  
“Jupiter king of the Gods they claim,  
“and shapes of beast and shapes half human  
“and shapes of animals without shame  
“he took to enjoy mere mortal woman.  
“He bore Europa as a bull  
“upon his back, and the tower full  
“of gold betrayed his Danae,  
“Leda the swan, Antiope  
“the satyr, lightning Semele,  
“and many children by all these  
“and others had he—Hercules,  
“Bacchus, Apollo, Amphion,  
“Perseus, Sarpedon, every one  
“a bastard, and daughters full a score,  
“Diana, Helen, and those nine  
“men call the Muses, and indeed  
“make mention too of Ganymede!  
“The fair youth pourer of the wine,  
“pourer of wine and somewhat more.  
“Vulcan the blacksmith they create

"a god who holds within his hands  
 "nails and a hammer, God and poor !  
 "like mortal man the slave of fate,  
 "else wherefore such a trade endure ?  
 "and lame withal, and loving Venus,  
 "who such a lover scarce withstands !  
 "Then Mercury, a subtle thief,  
 "and an enchanter ; Esculapius  
 "the leech, the bruiser of the leaf,  
 "mixer of potions, slain with thunder  
 "by Jove who loved the Spartan ; wonder  
 "indeed where all his healing lay !  
 "And Mars the god who stole away  
 "the sheep, and fell to loving Venus ;  
 "'Come,' says Cupido, 'and between us,  
 "'Vulcan, we'll bind the amorous god.'  
 "Sheep-stealer, warrior, lover chained,  
 "what paths has not your godhead trod ?  
 "And yet such monster is not disdained  
 "by the mad Greeks, and to Bacchus even  
 "do they accord a place in heaven—  
 "madman, adulterer, fugitive, slave,  
 "drunkard, soon hunted to the grave  
 "by the Titans. And one drunkard more  
 "I yet must add to the long score  
 "—Hercules, murderer of his children,  
 "who burned himself—and God Apollo,  
 "a minstrel bearing case and bow.  
 "Hark, to his harping, ever when  
 "the people pass, with wreathèd smile,  
 "behold this gipsy god beguile  
 "the simple folk, a god foretelling  
 "the future in their cross-lined palms !



" A penniless god reduced to selling  
 " his very deity for alms.  
 " Ay, let him harp and ne'er so sweetly,  
 " in hell his friends shall burn full meetly !  
 " Diana chasing in the wood  
 " the deer and boar : ha ! ha ! 'twere good  
 " to find divinity in her,  
 " and yet those fools her worship share  
 " among the rest. See Venus rise  
 " wanton from ocean, in her eyes,  
 " blue, blue and moist with the sea's brine  
 " is lust enough to turn to swine  
 " all Circe spared, for paramour  
 " now Mars now Vulcan, gentle or boor,  
 " it matters not, so oft she change.  
 " Her loves among the mortals range ;  
 " now mad for dark Anchises she  
 " makes toil for him the very sea,  
 " now fair Adonis whom the boar  
 " slew, and his mistress doth adore  
 " to madness, seeking hill and vale  
 " in vain, and now must crave of pale  
 " Persephone, and storms and cries  
 " for the lost violet of his eyes.  
 " Ay, weeping wanton, ay, Adonis,  
 " in hell indeed your double throne is.  
 " Ay, dwell thou there, immortal killed.  
 " Ay, follow him, thou goddess filled  
 " with all iniquity. Thus, Sire,  
 " are the Greeks sunk in evil dire,  
 " mimicking those who make of hell  
 " a place where even gods may dwell.  
 " But now the Egyptian cult behold,

"more mad than these a thousand fold ;  
 "for while Chaldea adores the star  
 "rising at even, and the Greek  
 "at least in human form doth seek  
 "his God, the vile Egyptians are  
 "sunk to the worship of the brute,  
 "the plant, the tree, and are defiled  
 "with evil upon evil piled.  
 "—A pyramid which hath its root  
 "in the mire of life: first they adored  
 "Isis, whose brother and whose lord  
 "Osiris was, whom Typhon slew,  
 "—brother his brother—and Isis knew  
 "no peace and with her infant son  
 "Horus to Biblis fled and sought  
 "Osiris in her grief distraught ;  
 "till Horus, come to man's estate,  
 "slew Typhon. Thus these gods each one  
 "are weaklings and must bow to fate ;  
 "—Isis is helpless to regain  
 "husband and brother, Typhon slain  
 "must pass to the underworld. In pain  
 "and infelicity and death  
 "these gods must draw their mortal breath ;  
 "yet these the Egyptians do adore,  
 "these and as many strange gods more  
 "as they may hear of and god—brutes  
 "their vain idolatry salutes—  
 "sheep, goat, calf, pig, ram, crocodile,  
 "vulture, hawk, eagle, aspic, dragon,  
 "wolf, monkey, cat, and all that's vile ;  
 "these worship they, these call upon  
 "for aid in war, these though they rot,

“are slain and eaten, know they not  
“for false ; and ah ! it marvels me  
“that Greek, Egyptian, and Chaldee,  
“seeing his gods forged, beaten, hewn,  
“consumed with time, their members strewn  
“to the four winds, can yet believe.  
“And an ill turn have their poets done,  
“thinking to praise them as they weave  
“their fables, for if God be one  
“then in His parts is unity.  
“But if the gods the gods pursue,  
“ravish and murder ; then ’tis true  
“from wills divided, wills malign,  
“such motions spring, and none can be  
“held god of all their company.  
“Last, of the Jews of Abraham’s line  
“dwelling in Egypt ; these the Lord  
“succoured and saved by Aaron and Moses ;  
“but vile, they slay with reckless sword  
“the prophets, and all their pleasure is  
“in following the Gentile’s gods,  
“and when Christ Jesus walked on earth,  
“of the Virgin born in stainless birth,  
“outraged and bound and scourged with rods,  
“they delivered Him to Pontius Pilate,  
“the Roman President, their hate  
“grown stronger with each benefit  
“that on their thankless heads had lit.  
“And now one God omnipotent  
“they do adore, but not as meant  
“by the holy writings, for they are  
“from the true faith strayed almost as far  
“as are the Gentiles. But Christ Jesus,

“ Son of great God sent down for us,  
“ born of the Virgin without fleck  
“ by the Holy Spirit, for our sake  
“ made flesh, to Him we bow the neck,  
“ we Christians, to Him who came to take  
“ our sins on Him, and crucified  
“ in mortal flesh, on the Cross He died ;  
“ and rose on the third day again,  
“ conqueror of hell and death and pain,  
“ with His held converse forty days,  
“ then rose before their eyes to Heaven.  
“ In Him believe we, Him we praise,  
“ and with the Trinity engraven  
“ within our hearts, we hold the faith,  
“ and, Sire, if you read what the Book saith,  
“ you will come to the knowledge of God, His Son,  
“ and the Holy Spirit, Three in One.”

Thus ended Nachor, but from all  
the pagans present, slight and small,  
came the answers to his argument.  
Then raged Abenner mightily  
against the sages ; some he smote  
in the face, the robes of others rent,  
and some he drove forth to be scourged ;  
in the eyes of others slaves rubbed soot,  
and still the King his fury urged,  
but yet spared Nachor, having sworn  
the Christians safe, and dreaming still  
that, left with Joasaph, he will  
yet wean him from the faith new-born.  
But Nachor now, with Joasaph,  
came to the palace, and was safe  
from the pagan crowd that followed them

with curses smothered at the hem  
 of the Prince's robe, then said the Prince :  
 " Nachor, I marvelled ever since  
 " your speech began, for well I knew  
 " your face, and wondered what fresh lies  
 " against the faith you might devise.  
 " Ay, well I saw your misery through  
 " the rags of soul that covered you ;  
 " yet were your words as words of fire,  
 " such as the tongues of flame inspire.  
 " And now I give you as reward  
 " the mightiest gift I can afford."  
 Then Joasaph declared the faith,  
 and Nachor harkened (for his defence  
 had been as the prayer that a child saith  
 after its nurse), and, " I hear ! I hear !  
 " Now see I with the blinded eye  
 " of the heart which the ancient enemy  
 " pierced in his malice ; but ah ! I fear  
 " too old am I in every sin  
 " the gates of Heaven to enter in,"  
 wept Nachor ; but Joasaph, " God at need  
 " can of these stones raise Abraham's seed.  
 " And come they at tierce, sext, noon, or vespers,  
 " or come they at dawn with the sparrow's  
     whispers,  
 " so they have worked in the Father's vineyard,  
 " each labourer hath the like reward." ·  
 Thus he raised up Nachor, and comforted him,  
 and with broken voice and with eyes yet dim,  
 thus spoke that ancient penitent :  
 " Most noble Prince, from Heaven sent  
 " to be my Saviour, now the jewel

“ I hold in my hand, and life as fuel  
“ of sacrifice and penitence  
“ I would offer to the only God.  
“ So an it please you, hastening hence,  
“ I will seek the desert wastes untrod,  
“ and strive with sorrow, penitence, pain,  
“ some scrap of goodness to attain,  
“ while yet life lasts.” Then Joasaph  
thanked God, whose infinite pity hath  
a thousand ways to touch and heal,  
embraced the veteran, who did steal  
forth from the town, by all unseen,  
till in the desert a monk he found  
who dwelt in a cavern beneath ground.  
Him as of old the Magdalene  
fell Nachor the sandalled feet before,  
weeping many a bitter tear,  
and holy baptism he did crave.  
This with due preparation gave  
the holy man, and in the cave  
dwelt Nachor with him many a year,  
worshipping God in love and fear ;  
then went he happy to the grave.  
Meanwhile, in sorry plight they were,  
mages and sages, for Abenner  
grew daily in the cult more cold,  
nor sacrificed he as of old,  
and many a goat and sheep and ox,  
pick of the herd, pearl of the flocks,  
lowed his last or bleated fast,  
while the white-robed theories passed,  
all destitute of majesty ;  
and the King not even deigned to cast

a glance toward those gods whose glory  
was now for him but a children's story,  
heard half his life by some strange fate,  
then changed at the last for something great,  
beyond his habits and his heart.

For Abenner's life in chiefest part  
merged in the dizzying joys of sense,  
which of all joys are most intense ;  
drunk not with wine, but with desire,  
"held by the thorn," as saith Isaiah.

Hence the King wavered as drew near  
the greatest festival of the year,  
and the priests of the pagans were in fear  
lest he might let the season pass  
and make no offering, and thus be lost  
the cult for ever. Now there was  
one man in the kingdom, Theodas,  
who could work on the mind of the King, for most  
of all his subjects Abenner held  
this man in reverence, called him friend,  
and further showered without an end  
honours upon him, but Theodas  
dwelt apart in a lone cavern,  
where many devils and souls that burn  
waited his orders ; for he was  
a great magician, and the Cross  
his enemy. So when they came  
and besought him with each winning name  
that he would deign to wean the King  
from the God of the Christians, the thing  
seemed to him pleasant ; wherefore tracing  
marks in the sand, and therein pacing,  
called he on Ashtaroth, Astarte,

and his other gods that they should be  
with him to aid, and all the legion  
of lesser fiends came round, that the air  
was thick and black as is despair,  
when the city gates before them shone.  
Then at a sign these evil things  
did hide themselves with airy wings,  
while with a palm branch in his hand,  
wearing a goatskin, Theodas  
came to the place where the King was.  
Smiling, he bowed, and, "Sire, I come  
"to wish you joy for the Christian band  
"by your philosophers made dumb;  
"and if it seem good to you would pray  
"that youths and maidens passing fair,  
"and sheep and oxen and incense rare,  
"we offer to the gods to-day,  
"since by their aid the monstrous creed  
"of Jesus Christ is dead indeed."

Then Abenner: "Alas, dear friend, not so;  
"the Christian triumphed. But let blood flow  
"till a crimson veil the altar covers.  
"Perchance the gods did hunt or travel,  
"or quaffing deep ambrosial mead,  
"they did forget Abenner's need,  
"and thus my fool philosophers  
"the Christian's lies could not unravel."

Then the King made sign, and the victim's groans  
almost made weep the granite stones.

Then said Abenner, "Theodas,  
"you are my friend, you are more wise  
"than the cat of Egypt in whose eyes  
"all of the past and future lies.



" Prince Joasaph to plague me has  
 " declared him for the creed of death,  
 " taught him by Barlaam, monk, whose breath  
 " makes freeze the very blood in my bones,  
 " then surge again in waves of fire.  
 " Now an your wit can find a way  
 " to bring him back to the light of day,  
 " as once the queen of all desire  
 " her boy from Hades, turkis stones  
 " and margarets shall adorn the base,  
 " and a heaven of sapphires fill the space  
 " of the flowing robe of the statue raised  
 " in gold to Theodas, whose face  
 " shall aye smile on the King's palace,  
 " and ever bear this legend traced :  
 " ' Here lieth Theodas, who led  
 " ' Prince Joasaph back from the dead.' "  
 Then Theodas, having taken counsel  
 with the abysmal things of evil  
 which hung about him in the air,  
 his thought did place before the King,  
 but subtly he draped the devilish thing  
 in the robes of fable, seeming fair.  
 " Once to a King in his old age  
 " a son was born to be his heir,  
 " and the King's own Astrologer  
 " with globe and circle did engage  
 " to cast the Prince's horoscope.  
 " When this was done : ' There is no hope,  
 " ' said the astrologer, that your son,  
 " ' my liege, will ever see the sun,  
 " ' save in a dark inclusive chamber  
 " ' where never a ray of light shall enter ;

"for lustres twain he shall remain  
 "till the Bull ride free of the Crab again  
 "(so fickle in their vagaries are  
 "the body's humours, and the star  
 "that reigns at birth).' So was it done,  
 "and when the invisible years had run  
 "said the King: 'Tis time that the Prince wide-  
   eyed  
 "the joys of the beautiful world espyed.'  
 "Therefore they gathered jewels and arms,  
 "chariots and horses, that enchant  
 "the eye of youth, all save the greatest—  
 "fair women with their thousand charms.  
 "And the Prince on his white elephant  
 "passed down the flowered streets of the town,  
 "and of each show preferred the latest.  
 "Till by him went some fair women.  
 "'What are those things that are not men?'  
 "queried the Prince; 'Why, demons they  
 "'born and bred to lead men astray,'  
 "answered the guides, as back they led  
 "the Prince to the palace; and the King said:  
 "'Of all those beautiful things, which one  
 "'do you the most desire, my son?'  
 "Then said the Prince, 'Pardie, I find  
 "'the demons most are to my mind.'"  
 "Now well I know that oft ere now  
 "for the Prince was broke the virgin's vow,"  
 said Theodas, "but find a girl  
 "who shall be fair as a pure pearl,  
 "and tempt him with her night and day,  
 "and let no man come near to him,  
 "but always in the stilled and dim

“and scented corridors let play  
“the maiden’s robes, and they shall draw  
“the Prince back to the world once more.”  
Thus counselled Theodas, and the King  
bethought him that the dice of war  
had thrown a royal maid to him  
whom he might use as a plaything.  
A maid she was both fair and slim,  
white as a lily, and her eyes,  
nor large, nor small, shone in such wise  
as none dared long to look on them.  
Her smooth face filled her oval mirror  
as a picture framed, the lips of her  
were red and thin like a rose on the stem,  
red and white petalled when she smiled;  
trim curls in sparse arrangement clomb  
the golden barrier of the comb  
which held them prisoners in rows;  
her ears had echo’s self beguiled  
to tiny secrets, and her nose  
dwelt like the flower amid the snows,  
which clings upon the precipice,  
yet being perfect is as fair  
as snowflakes in the rare clear air.  
Her thoughts were all that evil is.  
Such was this princess, and she came  
upon the mission of her shame,  
humbly clad as a handmaiden,  
bearing upon a golden plate  
grapes and a cloven pomegranate,  
and kneeling before the Prince she said:  
“My Lord, that art the flower of men,  
“have pity on me, a captive led,

"a princess royal in distress.  
 "Ah! sad my fate, and often I  
 "have all but had the strength to die,  
 "who am weary of living as a slave.  
 "Methinks that the Christian God might save  
 "my soul an he cared, but who can care  
 "for a slave princess, though ne'er so fair?"  
 Thereat she gathers in her eyes  
 a tear or twain, and Joasaph cries:  
 "O woman, believe in God, be bride  
 "of Jesus Christ who was crucified  
 "to save the world"; and told of Eve  
 (her whom the serpent did deceive),  
 how from the garden she must fly  
 and once immortal yet must die  
 by her own sin; but now no heed  
 the maiden payed to the Prince, for she  
 with the spirit of evil secretly  
 communed, and then she spoke indeed  
 as with his tongue: "O sweet my lord,  
 "if you would save my soul, accord  
 "the boon she craves to your handmaiden.  
 "Let this couch be our marriage bed."  
 Then Joasaph: "Woman, all in vain  
 "is your request, though I would fain  
 "rescue your soul, but unpolluted  
 "I have sworn since baptism to remain."  
 Then she with her thin lips downward curving,  
 her flower-poised head on her shoulders swerving,  
 "Ah! Prince, what I ask is not all evil;  
 "your Christian books I have read and heard:  
 "'stainless is marriage and honourable.'  
 "And 'those whom marriage has joined together,

"let them remain so joined for ever.'  
 "And have the ancient prophets erred?  
 "when Peter, prince of the Church, took wife?  
 "and with her dwelt he all his life;  
 "therefore does marriage not defile."  
 "Woman, you speak the truth," he said,  
 "honourable is the marriage bed,  
 "but for those in baptism reborn,  
 "who to the Almighty God have sworn  
 "to remain always virgin, pure,  
 "so long as life on earth endure,  
 "that is impossible." Then said she:  
 "My Prince, even as you say, let be,  
 "but grant me yet this only prayer,  
 "to clasp me in your arms to-night,  
 "and with the first of the morning light  
 "I will deny the gods, I swear,  
 "and become Christian; think of me,  
 "a soul nigh lost eternally,  
 "whom you may save; the joy in Heaven  
 "over one sinner saved they say  
 "is greater than for righteous seven;  
 "and think of Timothy whom Paul  
 "did circumcise that he might stay  
 "the greater evil with the small."  
 Thus tempted him this subtle maid,  
 urged by the dæmon who is learned  
 as any monk in holy writ.  
 And in his veins the proud blood burned  
 and all his senses for her yearned,  
 exquisitely pleading there  
 with eyes, lips, tongue and body swayed  
 like a flame when a breeze blows on it.

Then fell the Prince on his knees and prayed :  
" O Lord, in Thee hath Joasaph trusted ;  
" let him not be discomfited."

And as he prayed sleep came to him  
and touched those long curved lashes dim  
with tears and strife ; and sleeping thus  
descended Angels and they bore  
him to a garden marvellous,  
adorned with trees whose foliage made  
sweet music, and a rivulet wound  
curve upon curve in the cool shade,  
and groups celestial sitting round,  
conversed, a heavenly company.  
And Joasaph aye wondered more ;  
and as he went he seemed to be  
within the walls of a fair city ;  
resplendent, litten from above  
with a light which seemed both light and love.  
And in this place for every breath  
he would have died an earthly death,  
and musing as he walked he saith :

" I will remain for ever here  
" beneath the shadow of the trees,  
" or in the city wandering  
" will harken to the speech of these,  
" which is most heavenly sweet and clear ;  
" and mayhap with long sojourning  
" I shall come like them, fair as they,  
" and know the manner of their speech,  
" and hear the wisdom that they teach."

Then a voice sounded in his ear :

" Mayhap upon a distant day  
" with sorrow, sweat and travail borne

“you may come hither, but not yet  
“is your mortality outworn ;  
“watch then and pray, for many a year.”  
Then the Prince was sudden carried thence,  
hurtling through air, till in his face  
struck a foul odour, and he stood  
upon the brink of a dark place,  
which reeked as though with pestilence ;  
where as worms coil in rotten wood  
legions of dæmons bit and tore  
and healed and tortured evermore  
the loathsome bodies of the lost.  
Then the spirit took him back again  
and feverish on his couch he tost,  
fearful of hell and hellish pain,  
craving for Paradise amain.  
So the King feared lest he should die,  
and Theodas sent that he should try  
to heal him with his wizardry.  
But ere the dread magician trod  
the palace steps, Prince Joasaph knew  
the advent of the foe of God ;  
as a blow in his face these words he threw :  
“Hark, thou abode of sin abysmal,  
“blacker than darkness palpable,  
“thou seed of Babylon descended  
“from those that built the tower Chaldæan,  
“by which the whole world went astray ;  
“meat for the flames, thou beast unclean,  
“that turnest the traveller from his way.  
“Ha ! blush thou there, thou idol carver,  
“older than are the gods who are drunk,  
“or in vile pleasures deeper sunk

"than swine that every foulness garner,  
 "thou spawn of hell, dost thou not know  
 "that the sun shines on all below  
 "indifferently, and the iron turns  
 "from black to red in the bright flame,  
 "nor is the iron or the sun  
 "therefore defiled?—thus Jesus came  
 "and on the cross a death of shame  
 "for mortals suffered every one."  
 "But if He be the most High God!"  
 said Theodas, "wherefore did He choose  
 "from the vile people of the Jews  
 "twelve of the vilest, wherefore trod  
 "a land remote?" Then the Prince: "Art thou  
 "the ass that heard the harp resound  
 "in music sweet, yet cropped the ground,  
 "unconscious of the melody,  
 "or the aspic that will stop his ear,  
 "lest he the charmer's song shall hear?  
 "Ay! if the Ethiopian change his skin,  
 "or the leopard his diversity,  
 "then mayest thou change thy coat of sin:  
 "and the heaven and the earth shall pass away,  
 "but My word shall remain alway.  
 "Ye harken not to the fishermen,  
 "to the heavenly trumpeters sent to men,  
 "but think that the images once made  
 "to adorn the memory of the brave,  
 "since those lost times have ever stayed  
 "as gods with us to slay or save.  
 "For the demons who are crafty folk  
 "seeing that here somehow was smoke,  
 "themselves indeed supplied the fire,



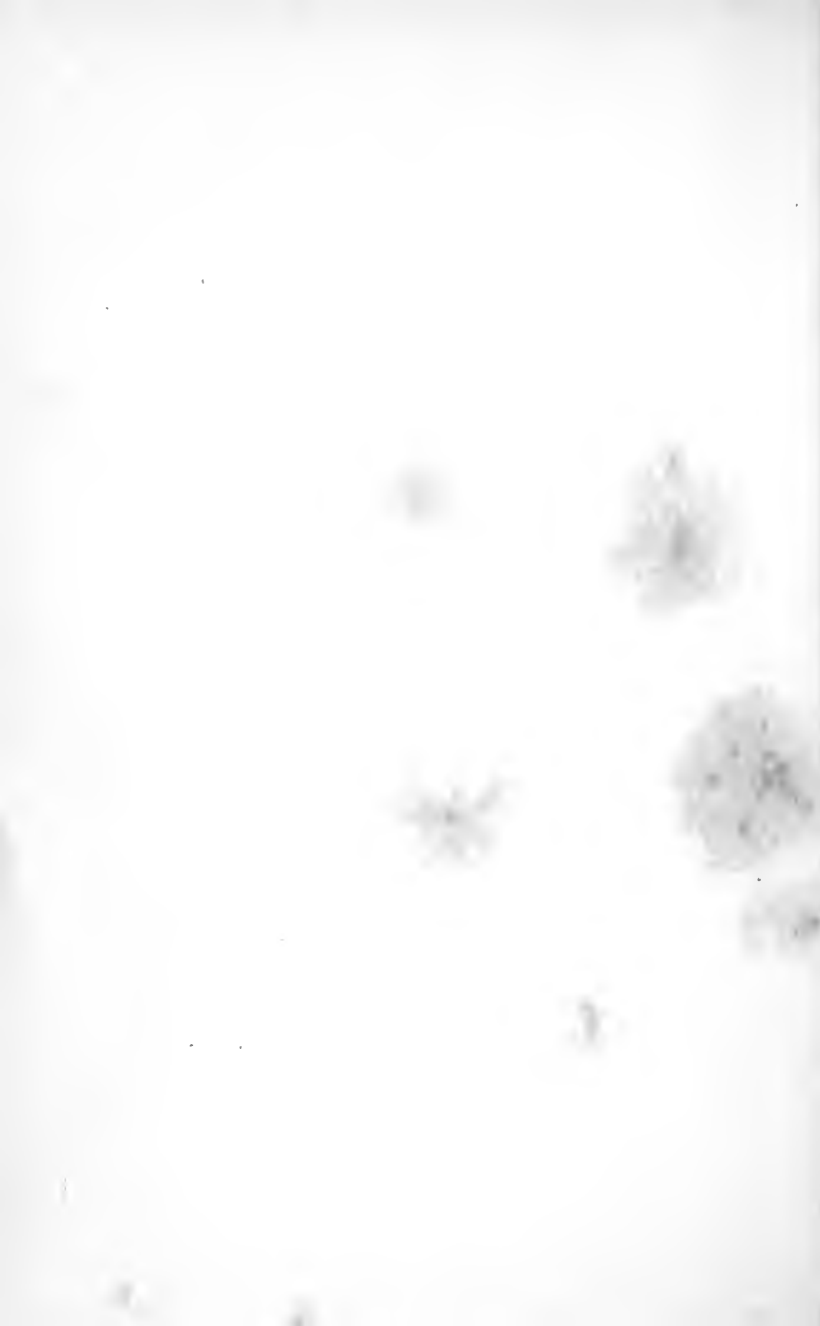
“haunting the statues and deceiving  
“with lies the faith of the believing,  
“thereafter damned to anguish dire.  
“Thus these things were till Christ descended  
“and those who willed their errors mended.  
“By the word of the Lord were the skies estab-  
lished,  
“and of His Spirit He created  
“all things that in the world exist.”  
Then Theodas, having heard with wonder  
these words of wisdom, made no answer,  
but as one struck with sudden thunder,  
knew the Lord, and his soul had sight,  
and he would strive to reach the light.  
Therefore in council: “Truth,” he cried,  
“doth with Prince Joasaph abide.  
“Great is the Christian’s God, and great  
“their faith and their mysteries excellent.”  
Then turning to Joasaph, “Too late  
“I come,” he said, “but others may  
“follow thee on the holy way,  
“and learn to fly the road I went.”  
“Not so,” said the Prince, “but as a son  
“returning from a distant land  
“whom grasps his father by the hand,—  
“thus God will welcome everyone  
“who comes, though his life be almost done.”  
Thus Joasaph spoke, and on Abenner  
gazed all the ministers of state.  
Deep sunk in thought he pondered there,  
and the breath of the councillors as they sat  
waiting his verdict vibrated  
like the weighing scales that hesitate

till the full measure of the weight  
weighs one side down. Then towards them turned,  
with a changed voice strange words he said :  
“ My lieges, in the lapse of time  
“ full many a noble city falls,  
“ whereof the tracing of the walls  
“ which once to Heaven rose sublime  
“ scarcely at all may be discerned,  
“ and as of cities, so of kings,  
“ whose puissance from the high gods springs ;  
“ they have their budding time, their June,  
“ their fervid summer, but all too soon  
“ comes autumn with that scythe of his,  
“ and soon is winter shivering there,  
“ —old age with snowflakes in his hair.  
“ And since even kings and kingdoms end,  
“ it may be that the gods too wane,  
“ mayhap we sacrifice in vain,  
“ adoring dying deities,  
“ while with the young, new god to friend  
“ all golden-haired prosperities  
“ may on my kingdom come again.  
“ Therefore to my beloved son  
“ Prince Joasaph, whom all men love,  
“ the province Antelar, I give,  
“ of all my lands the fairest one.  
“ There let him dwell, and in each grove  
“ he shall worship Jesus Christ the while,  
“ and thus for five years he shall live,  
“ and if perchance the new god smile,  
“ and the land and its folk are prosperous,  
“ then everywhere it shall be thus  
“ as in Antelar, for I would serve

“those gods alone who can preserve,  
‘whose arm is long to heal or harm ;  
“they are wiser than the wisest kings,  
“whose power the span of a lifetime rings.”  
Thus spoke Abenner, and Joasaph sighed,  
but thither went where his sire him sent.  
And in a year Abenner died,  
and the folk of his kingdom loudly cried  
for the gods that were in Antelar,  
since there the folk were happier far  
and richer too than anywhere  
in all the land of Abenner.  
So Joasaph came from Antelar,  
and all the nations near and far  
sent embassies with presents rare,  
and he was crowned King of the land.  
Now his first thought when gathered there  
the ambassadors in order stand,  
was how the Christian faith should reach  
everywhere in the land of each.  
Therefore he called Barachias  
(the same as once with Nachor was).  
Barachias said : “ In Antelar  
“a thousand youthful Christians are ;  
“let us send them forth to preach the word  
“to your subjects who have never heard  
“even the name of Christ.” And so  
did Joasaph, and near and far  
soon all believed as in Antelar.  
But soon the Prince of power grew tired,  
and soon with all his soul desired  
Barlaam his friend once more to greet,  
to sit once more at the hermit’s feet.

Therefore he took his golden crown  
and gave it to Barachias,  
who as the new King crowned was,  
and as night fell he left the town  
on his favourite steed, and soon came where  
a clearing in the forest showed  
a moonlit space, and here a face  
appeared to him of subtle grace ;  
and moving as a queen most fair  
the temptress of his youth he saw ;  
more radiant now than e'er before.  
But stronger Joasaph as she  
was fairer, and he passed her by  
heedless of smiles and the plaintive cry  
she uttered as she saw him flee.  
Then as the morning light first drew  
those veils of hers from off the day,  
hunger and thirst King Joasaph knew ;  
and from the branches of a tree  
he plucked the fruit, and lo, a voice  
came from the tree : " Rejoice, rejoice,  
" my fruit is plucked by Joasaph  
" who in him all the virtues hath."  
Then onward fared the King, and the sun  
blazed in the heaven as he passed  
those green spiked shrubs which are the last  
to fringe the desert when is done  
the forest's due ; from one of these  
sprang forth a tiger, and did stand  
barred black and yellow in the sand,  
and roared on Joasaph, but he  
passed onward smiling, as to please  
his fancy such a monster roared

before the freedman of the Lord,  
him whom so late the damsel fair  
had failed to draw to hell with her.  
Now nigh this spot does Barlaam dwell,  
where is the only desert well,  
and where the one wide-spreading palm  
gives food and shelters from the harm  
of the angry sun, and Joasaph  
to guide his steps the vision hath  
of the old saint who sleeps and prays  
and joins the circle of his days.  
Thus each met other, and the rest  
with the desert sand is covered best,  
as were their bodies when they passed  
hand in hand to the Lord at last.



PART III  
THE MEETING OF THE  
CREEDS





"THUS ends the tale of the prophets twain,  
 "one born in purple and both to pain,"  
 said the saint ; and for a time there fell  
 silence on that strange company,  
 as when on an island in the sea  
 meet birds strayed thither from afar :  
 for faithful and Christian, infidel,  
 were gathered there beneath the palms  
 and heard the fountain's tinkling notes  
 which to the speaker music are,  
 bearing his thought as on white arms,  
 or speaking for him from the throats  
 of the cooing doves which come and go,  
 and the very marble seems to know.  
 Thus as they mused the great vizier  
 rose, and thus spake Al Zobeir :  
 "I thank you, John Mansour, my friend,  
 "for your strange tale, wherein you blend  
 "evil with good and false with true  
 "as ever the Christian's wont to do.  
 "Allah shower blessings on your head ;  
 "long may you live ; may Allah smile  
 "upon your parents' souls meanwhile.  
 "But, by the Archangel Gabriel,  
 "who on the wings of Alborak  
 "led the prophet along the star-strown track,  
 "by Jebril and by Azrael,  
 "of Aîça <sup>1</sup> you have spoken ill.  
 "No God is he, but sent by God  
 "to bear a message down from heaven ;  
 "no share, no part in God has he,  
 "lesser by all infinity,

<sup>1</sup> Jesus.

"though much to him indeed was given.  
 "Talk not of Three, God is but One,  
 "and though He sent Aîça down,  
 "yet was and is He only One;  
 "and Mahomet His Prophet alone.  
 "God fight the Jews who on their back  
 "bear the Law as an ass its pack.  
 "God fight the Jews and the Christians too.  
 "Let Aîça, Ezra have their due  
 "among the lesser messengers.  
 "Have done with Three, I say, have done!  
 "'Twere better for you; God is One."  
 (The turbaned crowd made murmurs loud.)  
 And Mecca is the Holy Place  
 where in the ever sacred space  
 is the great Temple Kaaba.  
 Here Adam journeyed from afar  
 and prayed to God that he might raise  
 a temple where to chaunt His praise.  
 Then Allah smiled, and he made certain  
 the shape thereof on a luminous curtain  
 displayed from Heaven; and after death  
 had drawn his first of human breath,  
 by Seth rebuilt, bright it shone.  
 And when Seth Adam's way had gone,  
 came Abraham and Ishmael,  
 who wrought upon it many a day.  
 Then, for he loved them, Gabriel  
 who is man's friend, did seek that stone  
 which of all things on earth alone  
 is part of God, is as His arm,  
 more strong than any djinn or charm,  
 and fell from Heaven when Adam fell.

Therefore this stone brought Gabriel ;  
 and white at first, by woman's touch  
 or man's transgression, black as night  
 it stands in the Temple on the right,  
 and the White Stone whereon upstanding  
 wrought Abraham, and aye expanding  
 or falling as to suit his need  
 this stone was shown divine indeed—  
 stands on the left as you enter in.  
 And Zem Zem is the desert well  
 where Agar came with Ishmael.  
 These things are holy and the rest  
 within the Book is sought for best,  
 the very words which Allah spoke ;  
 and the tradition is unbroke  
 which tells the faithful all that lies  
 hid in the Book from mortal eyes.  
 This is the truth and this alone :  
 God is not many, God is One.  
 Thus ended Zobeir, and the crowd  
 cried : " Allah slay the Christian dogs " ;  
 cried : " Eblis burn the Christian logs ."  
 But Zobeir signed and all was still,  
 and the tinkling fountain alone did ~~fell~~ <sup>fill</sup> *(i*  
 the ever-widening silences,  
 margined with whispers. Suddenly  
 from the far fringe of the throng arose  
 a man carved out of ebony.  
 And, " Sir," cried he, " much wisdom is  
 " in what you tell and light it throws  
 " on the Path a little ; but such a tale,  
 " wearing the yellow Indian veil,  
 " which changes much, for me did gleam

“ years, years ago, unless I dream,  
“ in the very distant Indian land  
“ upon whose shell-beflowered strand  
“ came Barlaam with the tale of Christ.  
“ And for this tale has travelled far  
“ and subtle the Christian doctors are  
“ to change the end, though letting blow  
“ the lotus blooms which long ago  
“ Ananda planted, and the rest,  
“ When Gautama had reached the rest  
“ Nirvana, and left nought behind  
“ Save the great bridge by which mankind,  
“ like him, enlightenment may find,  
“ fain would I speak and fain declare  
“ where most the Christian doctors err.  
“ Yea, Joasaph was the prince for whom  
“ Came Buddha-Barlaam through the gloom  
“ which did encompass him and shone  
“ before his face for him alone,  
“ as seems the moon on each to shine  
“ only and yet her light divine  
“ on all humanity is shed,  
“ yet separately on each head.  
“ John talks of Christ, of God, of sin,  
“ of how Heaven’s gate we shall enter in,  
“ turns tales of men and gods *we* told  
“ to grey and sombre from their gold.  
“ We hate him not, but let all men know  
“ just where he stains the fountain’s flow  
“ which clear as crystal long ago  
“ Gautama poured. John’s Christ *may* be  
“ Buddha Maitreya and his word  
“ the future speech Gautama heard

“before his passing and declared  
“the ‘Buddha of kindness’ is the name  
“of Him to come, but the pure flame,  
“if John indeed had thought of him,  
“shines in his tale both small and dim  
“as a lamp which careless fingers trim.  
“There *is* no God as John declares  
“who waits and watches all men do  
“and metes his penance, as the snares  
“on the poor birds which toward them flew  
“in ignorance. No God doth wait  
“for man at the opening of death’s gate.  
“No soul there is which wings its flight  
“hellward nor heavenward through the night,  
“nor hears in hearing, sees in sight,  
“nor dwells a mystery out of sight  
“behind our senses, nor passes on  
“from one to another; *but* we burn  
“as a lamp burns and is the same  
“though thrice extinguished be its flame  
“and thrice relit; for all men yearn  
“and all desires pour oil upon  
“the flame of life.  
“Thus all men think and say and do  
“followeth each as his shadow true  
“till lust be dead and each may merge  
“in the great sea withouten surge,  
“withouten billows, calm and free  
“beyond all thought, ineffably  
“as would be One Thing everywhere  
“when nought were left to make compare.  
“That is Nirvana and the road  
“thither is eightfold as he showed,

“ lit by the noble truths fourfold,  
“ each glittering in priceless gold.  
“ And the first truth is life on earth,  
“ which is all sorrow from our birth  
“ onward through growth and pain till death  
“ shall take in pain our latest breath.  
“ And sad it is when man must dwell  
“ with those whose presence is a hell,  
“ and to leave those our life made glad  
“ for us and them is very sad.  
“ And the second truth is suffering’s cause,  
“ whereof Lord Buddha found the laws.  
“ Lust in its thousand forms surrounds  
“ our senses and their action bounds.  
“ The dream of life is born and thirst  
“ of pleasure leads us to the worst.  
“ Baited with pleasure is the net  
“ and pain the guerdon all men get  
“ who live for self; and truth the third  
“ as the second’s echo should be heard.  
“ ’Tis sorrows ceasing. He who knows  
“ the birth of self and chokes desire  
“ is free from lust, and the raging fire  
“ which finds no fuel sinks at last  
“ to rest in the empty furnace blast.  
“ And the fourth truth is the path which finding  
“ man’s self must vanish and all the blinding  
“ which from this fell illusion flows.  
“ And harken all, that all may know  
“ the eightfold path. Right knowledge first  
“ holds forth the torch on right resolve,  
“ right speech, right acts, and right rehearsed  
“ our efforts and our livelihood

“sought in such manner as is good.  
“Right thought must guide our mind to the light  
“and calm his mind who lives aright.  
“Now hear at the last this fable true  
“as it fell from the Buddha, that none may say :  
“‘ An Arahāt was here this day  
“‘ and held his speech, though well he knew  
“‘ that the Lord Buddha’s wisdom flew  
“‘ on the four winds and quite perverted  
“‘ did harm the lives of all who heard it.  
“‘ Pray not nor worship, but each strive  
“‘ his future fate to mend alive,  
“‘ for a man’s doing is his soul,  
“‘ which he can save and he alone  
“‘ can guide in safety to the goal.’  
“Now let this tale for the rest atone.

“Heaps of rubies and emeralds  
“and the same set round with the amorous gold  
“which in each carved and supple fold  
“the coming of an Empress heralds ;  
“and sapphires smiling like the sea  
“when the sun shines, and that strange stone  
“red by the lamplight, blue by day ;  
“and the opal and the veiled moonstone  
“showed the King to the merchant, and : ‘Fair  
indeed,  
“‘O King, are these,’ that merchant said.  
“Then the monarch to a garden led  
“his guest, and animals long dead  
“elsewhere in the world here browsed or fled  
“as they drew near, the unicorn,

"the hypogriff, and the phœnix bird  
 "which of the golden flames is born.  
 "Then said the merchant: 'Sire, most rare  
 "'are beasts and fowls, but have you heard  
 "'of the peacock with an hundred eyes  
 "'fixed in his tail?'—And the King said: 'Nay,  
 "'but my vizier must go straightway  
 "'and bearing with him store of gold  
 "'seek out the land where such birds are sold.'  
 "Thus spake the King, and the vizier  
 "must seek the peacock far and near.  
 "But since he found him not; said he:  
 "'Methinks no peacock fowl can there be  
 "'in all the world, but since the King  
 "'knows not the fowl, 'twere best I bring  
 "'a raven with a coloured breast  
 "'and feathers with an hundred eyes  
 "'painted upon him'; so he dyes  
 "the raven and himself with lies  
 "and brings the fowl the King unto  
 "swearing it is the peacock true.  
 "But soon again that merchant came  
 "and as a present for the King  
 "two real peacocks he doth bring.  
 "Thereat the vizier, who knew not shame,  
 "cried: 'Ha! these birds that the merchant brings  
 "'have falsehood written on their wings.  
 "'Come hither, all; come hither and see, all—  
 "'*my* peacock is the only real.'  
 "And the merchant answered him no word,  
 "but called for water and on the bird  
 "that the vizier brought did pour the same;  
 "and black at once that raven came



" all forlorn, of its glory shorn ;  
 " then the vizier poured water on  
 " the peacocks true, but the brighter shone  
 " their hundred eyes and pierced him through  
 " the while he poured, as was his due.  
 " And when these things the King did see,  
 " honoured indeed must the merchant be  
 " and driven for ever from his side  
 " was the vizier who the raven dyed.  
 " Now Buddha is the merchant bearing  
 " peacocks of truth for the world's sharing,  
 " the vizier an idolater ;  
 " and the Christian creed that everywhere  
 " steals and lies and changes and dyes  
 " is the black raven painted fair."  
 Thus hurled that Æthiopian  
 the ringing gauntlet at St. John  
 where yet he stood, and soon began  
 the saint to answer, but Zobeir  
 made sign for silence with waved hand :  
 And " Here at last and first have met  
 " three creeds that over many a land  
 " have travelled meeting and of each  
 " let what is said for bound be set.  
 " Thus were it best, since further speech  
 " would set on fire the soul of each ;  
 " and since they met here let us call  
 " this place, my spacious marble hall,  
 " the Meeting Place of the Three Creeds.  
 " And for my guest, his body's needs  
 " ask respite from the fray, and I  
 " true Moslem answer not the lie  
 " that the man of ebony has spoke,

“nor combat John Mansour; but now  
“bid all relax the knitted brow;  
“let sherbet and soft words assuage  
“the thunderous gathering of your rage.”  
He spake, and on them as a spell  
his words of wisdom softly fell:  
slaves brought regale, slim girls displayed  
in dance the grace that God had made,  
and as they danced the evening drew  
apace her veil across the sky.  
And of St. John?—That night he knew  
oblivion, and his pillowed rest  
was by no vision of sin oppressed;  
and on the morrow he did hie  
back to Mar Saba, purged of sin,  
and Isumbrand full soon between  
the solemn aisles of the chapel lies,  
and the same dirge the monks make rise  
to waft his soul upon its way  
as made St. John upon a day,  
and those be smiles about their eyes  
as for St. Isumbrand they pray.

FINIS

## NOTE

SOME ten years ago the author of the foregoing poem happened to enter the little theatre of the Chat Noir in Paris. A programme was thrust into his hand, and he seated himself within a few yards of the tiny stage. There was a pause. Then all at once, in the twilight of the auditorium, some hidden poet began, half to chaunt half to recite, a narrative. His mellow voice, reinforced by the music of an harmonium, seemed to melt into the essence of his theme. I was just able to read on the programme that this theme was "La Marche à l'Etoile," and the recitation the prelude to a mimic representation of those great movements of the ancient world which accompanied the birth of Christ. Soon against the illuminated foreground appeared in relief the wise men on their way to Bethlehem. As these passed across the tiny stage, with all their gifts, a change in the music and in the voice of the poet announced the magnificence of Rome, and a moment after the legions on the march swept by, to be followed in their turn by other groups attracted to the Star. Each was accompanied by voice and music, and I passed an enchanted hour among these majestic marionettes—for marionettes they were, tiny profiles against a lamp-lit background—an enchanted hour in which I felt more history than in a month's parade along the marble terraces of Gibbon. These profiles were capable of producing cosmic emotion such as I have never before or since experienced in a theatre. Emotion! That is what I have sought in the pages that precede. I have sought it in those great treasure-houses, the religions of the world. Where the heart of humanity has yearned, be it for a fetish, or a Trinity, there is the kingdom of the poet. I should indeed feel elated were any reader of "John of Damascus" to feel at any place an emotion similar to mine, that evening at the Chat Noir.

To touch upon the idiosyncrasies of the present poem.

Exception may be taken to its form, to the pauses and irregularities of rhyme and metre. I have purposely made these pauses as much for the sake of variety as from the fear lest many pages of metrical impeccability should have the same effect upon the reader as they invariably have upon the writer. Half an hour's steady application to the sonorous inevitability of the *Fairy Queen*, for instance, while it makes me cry *altitudo*, also prompts me to lay down the book from genuine weariness. I cannot listen to church bells, be they pealed by Ariel herself. I would rather spend an hour with Caliban. The free and irregular rhyming of the poem is also deliberate, and the occasional blank verses but its complement. In music the value of the discord is admitted : I believe it has possibilities in literature.

As regards the subject of the poem, since I treat it purely as poetry, I have no special apology to make, but a word or two as to the origin of the Barlaam and Joasaph legend may be of some interest to the reader, and tempt him to refer to the learned work on the subject by Mr. Jacobs.

"John of Damascus," it will be seen, consists of three parts, the first introductory to the second, the third a natural sequence to what goes before. It is a story framed in a picture. I have striven to suggest something of the environment, something of the ancestry of John of Damascus, in whose mouth I have placed my version of the legend. John of Damascus, the "Doctor of the Christian Art," as he was called, is at any rate the putative author of the Greek version of the legend, which Migne includes in his *Patrologia* with the rest of St. John's writings, and in matters of erudition, what is good enough for Migne is good enough for me.

But I have not felt bound to follow slavishly the Greek version. On the contrary, I have turned down many more or less flowery by-paths, and have added here a Georgian anemone, there an Arabic rose, to the grass of Parnassus, which forms the main fragrance of the bouquet. In all this, and most of what follows in the preface, I must express my indebtedness to Mr. Jacobs, who in his turn renders thanks to a host of learned Teutons, while in his perilous excursion

he holds fast to the most recent. For it must be confessed that the whole subject of Barlaam and Josaphat bristles with difficulties, yawns with philological precipices. Down none of these do I propose to scramble, nor to tear my coat among the stalwart cacti that adorn their brows. I will merely state the fact that the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat is a Christianised form of the Buddha legend. The word *Josaphat* has been proved the equivalent of *Bodhisattva*, "the man who is destined to become a Buddha." The word Barlaam apparently also signifies Bodhisattva, though the process by which this is attained surpasses lay comprehension. I will rather report from Mr. Jacobs' pages an university anecdote in the place of his argument. When Mr. Jacobs was at Cambridge, the boat of the non-collegiate students was generally known as the *Non-Coll. Boat*. One day it appeared as the *Heron*. Everyone was puzzled at the change, until a philologist remarked casually: "Of course they are the same. 'Non-Coll.' becomes by transposition 'coll-on,' and this by metathesis of *l* and *r* becomes 'coron.' Aspiration of the initial consonant gives 'choron,' which, again, by weakening of the aspirate and vernerising the vowel, becomes 'Heron.' Thus 'Non-Coll.' = 'Heron,' Q.E.D." Leaving the philological question in the non-collegiate boat, and turning to the legend, I will simply say that it is a form of the Buddha story which must have found its way overland from India by way of Persia during the reign of Chosroes. The original version was of course Indian, but that is lost, and Mr. Jacobs is of opinion that the fable was first translated from that language into *Pehlevi*, itself the origin of the other versions known to us. Arabic, Ethiopic, Georgian, Hebrew, Syriac, Slavonic, Latin and Greek, are but a few of the forms taken by this Protean fable. The Greek has chiefly occupied my attention, connected as it is with an interesting case of ecclesiastical conscience, which must send down the spine of "orthodox" and Catholic alike a thrill of danger overpassed. For it is certain both Churches came near canonising a kind of duplicate Buddha. In the great Menology of the Greek Church, under date August 26, stands the entry: "In remembrance of the holy Joasaph,

son of Abenner the king." In the Roman Martyrology, under date November 27, stands the entry : "Apud Indos, Persis finitimos (commemoratio) sanctorum Barlaam et Josaphat, quorum actus mirandos sanctus Joannes Damascinus conscripsit." Thus did the affairs of these excellent if somewhat mysterious personages appear in a highly satisfactory condition, their path to saintship through the jaws of the devil's advocate fairly safe, when, suddenly, in 1859, Monsieur Laboulaye dissipated their golden chances by revealing in the *Journal des Débats* their real origin. He proved conclusively that their legend was derived entirely from that of the Buddha. This discovery of necessity fluttered the doves of the Churches, and it is unlikely that the Buddha, in this, one of the most remarkable of his avatars, will figure for the future either in the Greek or Roman Calendars. Thus does science rudely snatch aureoles from many a head. But previously to this tragic moment in their history, Barlaam and Josaphat had enjoyed a fair meed of worship and renown. Sir Henry Yule talks of visiting a Church dedicated to *Divo Josaphat* in Palermo. In 1571, Luigi Movenigo, the Doge, presented to Sebastian of Portugal a bone of our hero ; when Spain seized Portugal in 1580, Antonio the Pretender subtly removed this treasure, which found its way to Antwerp, and on August 7, 1672, a grand procession bore it to the cloister of St. Salvator. With such comparatively slight solace must the Lord Buddha perforce content himself ; his success in other quarters must atone for any lack of attainment in respect to the Vatican. Indeed, that omniscient institution seems to have treated him for quite a number of years very considerably better than might have been expected.

As to the events connected with John of Damascus, they are mostly taken from his acts, save the meeting with Zobeir on his return and the incidents which follow that. The poem may be dated at about the middle of the eighth century. I have chosen Almansor to be Caliph, chiefly for reasons of euphony. St. John of Damascus is altogether an interesting personality. He combined and conciliated in himself many qualities. Erudite Father, able administrator, monk, poet, and prime minister ; he is one of the interesting

figures of the Middle Age. With his fine eye for literature, he quickly saw the value of the Barlaam legend, and left it to us in many pages of delightful Greek. I may also recommend his poetical writings to amateurs of the monkish muse.

Taking into consideration the considerable length of the poem as it stands, I believe myself to have been right in foreshortening the concluding parts,—namely, the statement of the true Buddhist position and the exposition of the Mohammedan faith. A greater development of both was very tempting, and I think it probable that I shall return to these subjects at no distant period. I have tried to maintain a sympathetic attitude to the several creeds as in turn they appear upon the canvas. All three are venerable, as indeed is every cause which has at any time made throb the human heart.

Lover of life, and therefore of illusion, I have revelled in the meadows and forests of the myth with a heart none the less light for the knowledge that all is illusion. Illusion, life; these are the same, I know, and yet the knowledge does not detract the smallest tittle from the beauties of my mistress, life. Experience, experience for ever, adventures of the body and the soul, only let each adventure surpass those that went before. And in such a quest one has just the adventures of which one is capable. Set sail then, again, and full sail away from the shore, certain that we shall sup this night in some palace of faëry within hail of the breakers of the deep.

The poet, though he may not be ignorant of the teachings of the wise, yet is impervious to them. His magic cloak prevents their soaking through and damping his soul. So he will ever continue on his way, helping to forge for humanity beautiful illusions as the old ones wear out, fighting and loving and eating and drinking with those who eat and drink and fight and love, dancing in the rose-chains of causality upon the ruins of the phenomenal world.

D. A.

DELGATY, 1900.

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